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DENYS OF AUXERRE

*First Published 1912*

# DENYS OF AUXERRE

A Drama

BY

JAMES BARTON



LONDON  
CHRISTOPHERS  
LANCASTER PLACE, STRAND, W.C.

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TO  
MY WIFE



## NOTE BY THE AUTHOR

THE story of Denys l'Auxerrois as told by Walter Pater in his *Imaginary Portraits* forms the foundation of this play. Denys, the central figure, though of obscure origin, had come by reason of his beauty and personal charm to represent in the popular imagination the genius of a new age, of which the accepted emblem was a Roman wine-flask found enclosed in an ancient coffin of stone. From this delicate bit of green glass there seemed to flow fresh and vitalizing influences, like that old-world *joie-de-vivre* of which scattered echoes linger faintly in classic song. There followed, too, seasons of exceptional mildness and unexampled plenty ; in the arts a wonderful power and inventiveness ; in the common relations of life great gladness and good fellowship. The actors in the first scene of the drama come fresh from a masque of Bacchus and Ariadne, in which the principal parts had been taken by Denys, No-man's son, and Ariane, daughter of the Lord of Auxerre. The play relates the sequel and must be left to explain itself.

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

THE LORD OF AUXERRE.  
THE BISHOP OF AUXERRE.  
PHILIP, *Count of Chastellux.*  
PERUSE } noblemen.  
ORME }  
DENYS L'AUXERROIS.  
HERMES, *a monk.*  
WALTER BASKERVILLE.  
JARNAC, *captain of men-at-arms.*  
RALPH, *one of his men.*  
MAYOR.  
MAYORESS.  
OLD MAN, *father of Doris.*  
CLEOPHAS, *a sculptor.*  
A VINEDRESSER.  
A PAINTER.  
A MASON.  
A TAPISER.  
A COUNTRYMAN.  
A LEPER.  
ARIANE, *daughter of Auxerre.*  
DORIS  
PETRONILLA }  
IMOGEN  
FRANCES  
BLANCHE  
NEPHTHYS }  
BUDDHA  
MAHOMET }  
ADAM  
JOB }  
*Market girls.*  
*Dream-shapes  
of the  
Underworld.*

*Citizens, countrymen, canons, masons and other workmen, men-at-arms, artists and craftsmen.*

SCENE . . . AUXERRE.  
TIME . . . 13TH CENTURY.

# DENYS OF AUXERRE

## ACT I

### SCENE I

*The market-place by the banks of the Yonne with the Cathedral in the background. Enter with other revellers, garlanded and wearing long robes, as from a masque of Bacchus, BLANCHE, IMOGEN, PETRONILLA and FRANCES. Citizens and countrymen in holiday attire throng the square.*

SEVERAL OF THE CROWD. Denys ! What, Denys !

A COUNTRYMAN. Tally-ho !

All the way to Jericho !

A CITIZEN. Stir about ! Some climb the trees,  
Through the wynds and alleys scatter.

BLANCHE. Ask the birds and ask the bees.

IMOGEN. At the fountain ask the satyr.

FRANCES. Babble brook and magpie chatter.

PETRONILLA. Shepherds, pipe it to your flocks—

BLANCHE. Naiads, whisper to the water,

Combing out your long wet locks—

ALL. Denys kissed the county's daughter.

*They go off in different directions calling for DENYS.*

*Enter PHILIP, booted and spurred, and PERUSE following him, dressed after the Greek manner with a leopard's skin and ivy wreath.*

PHILIP. God, the supporter of a princeling's shield,  
Pander to Bacchus ! All the fat shop-dames  
With breasts like dumplings cater for thy kisses.  
Oh, what a pudding-jack art thou to turn  
And spin about for Moll that wipes the dish !

PERUSE. By Jove ! but they were comely, sweet and  
kind ;  
One took my hand, and through the dance we ran  
To the quick drum-beats—

PHIL. Let me hear them roll  
With crash of brass and steeds that neigh for war.

PER. She blushed no deeper than the faint dog-rose,  
So maidenly, so delicate her cheek.  
But at her bosom there was pinned a flower  
Cupid had dipped in the dark wine of love,  
And still the perfume ravishes my soul.

PHIL. I would not thus, so lightly, win my mistress.  
Oh, cousin, cousin ! Lady Ariane !

PER. I tell thee, Philip, when thy mistress came  
'Twas as the sun bursts on wind-shaken flowers  
And they are hushed to rest. She wore a robe  
Of crimson spangled thick with golden stars.  
From her white throat it fell, and swept the earth  
In pride, soft-carpeted with verdure cool,  
Whereon she moved with more than mortal grace,  
Each footstep cadenced like melodious verse  
And every gesture music. In her hair  
Gems sparkled, silver-pale, like frozen dew,  
Yet these less lustrous than her dazzling eyes  
That outshone sun-kissed waves. Young Bacchus  
came,  
And like the sea upon the Naxian shore  
The enraptured concourse thundered their applause ;  
With such a look she thrilled him, where he stood,

A glowing god with purple clusters crowned,  
 And on her forehead set, or seemed to set,  
 As if to make full moonrise 'mongst those stars,  
 The melting jewel of a passionate kiss.

PHIL. God's blood !

PER. She blushed, she trembled, she sank down—

PHIL. Hold—

PER. Like a bride whom love has vanquished quite  
 He bore her to his car.

PHIL.                          Enough, enough !

I'll hear no more !

PER.                          With that the whole assembly  
 Rose to their feet, and from the grassy benches  
 Where they lay spread in sunshine holiday  
 Stormed the arena. Denys l'Auxerrois—

PHIL. Denys !

PER. 'Twas he that played the amorous god—  
 Slipped from our midst unseen ; and not a leaf  
 Nor silver ripple trembling to the shout  
 Of ' Denys ! Denys ! ' whispered of the way  
 He had withdrawn.

PHIL.                          A quack ! A jackanapes !

A fellow that laid by his spade and hoe  
 To sell greengroceries in the market-place—  
 Gawds, gewgaws of the East, vile tinsel trash  
 Sea-captains bring their trulls from the Levant ;  
 Attar and civet, jingling trinket toys,  
 With God knows what unholy drugs beside !  
 A waif o' the woods ! A she-goat-suckled kid,  
 Begotten by the rankest of the herd ;  
 A prick-eared faun as ever peeped through leaves  
 At village maidens bathing in a pool  
 And stole away their clothes !

PER.                          Peace ; you were best :

His Bacchants come ; for they have sworn to find  
 Their truant ; all the livelong night they'll dance  
 Beneath the stars, and sleep away the dawn.

*Enter BLANCHE, FRANCES, IMOGEN and PETRONILLA  
 with other girls dressed as Bacchants.*

CHOR. OF BACCHANTS.

Swift, with the song the arrow sings,  
 Out of the west flew the wild doves' wings  
 To the weed-hung caves where the salt winds wail  
 And the broad sea stretches with never a sail.  
 But the coming of Love was swifter far :  
 Lightly he leapt from his vine-wreathed car :  
 Like a flower when the rain-drops its beauty have  
 bowed  
 She sank on his sheltering breast ; like a cloud  
 Descending from heaven at twilight to sleep,  
 A virgin white-veiled on the mountain-steep.  
 God of the ivy, god of the vine,  
 Hide thee no more while the pale stars shine !  
 When day like a reaper hath bound up his sheaves  
 Love shepherds the shadows and love lifts the leaves.

[*Exeunt.*

ORME (*who has entered unperceived in the wake of the Bacchants*). A very pretty band of deaconesses  
 Whose lamps are plenished with right holy oil.  
 Here is a pool where one might cast a net  
 And draw a tailless mermaid safe to land.  
 Peruse, I counsel thee, turn fisherman,  
 And the full moon that warms the blood of whelks  
 Give thee good sport. What, my lord Chastellux,  
 Good fortune brings you safe home to Auxerre !  
 We give you merry welcome.

PHIL.

By the mass,

Too merry, sir.

ORME. Now by the ivied wand

Of Bacchus and the newborn babe of joy—

PHIL. I would the devil's grandam had your wand

To lay it on the little bastard's back

Ere he be breeched. His mother was a harlot

And every vice that she was kind to stands

Sponsor for his damnation.

ORME. Ye kind gods !

Was it for this the flask was disinterred,

The dead vine buds, and that old drab the earth

Reels in her drunken gait towards the sun,

When she should turn and weep the year away

In Winter's icy arms ?

PHIL. A murmur reached me

About this flask. Is't not some Roman thing

Still flaked and coated with Falernian ?

PER. What gods were they who pruned the vines and  
crushed

The purple berries, when some Satyr made

A blowpipe of his flute, and naked nymphs

Blew the bright bubble with their amorous breath,

When the mere rinsings in a modern mouth,

After a dozen centuries laid in earth,

Sets the weak brain a-rocking !

ORME.

Oh, brave bottle,

Not galbanum nor frankincense nor myrrh,

Blessed by the Patriarch of Jerusalem

And drunk upon the Holy Sepulchre,

Wormwood nor mallow, feverfew nor sage,

Sipped from a sacring bell with *salvum fac*,

Nor lenten lancet, ever drained the ducts

Or purged the mortal humours quite away

As thine all-healing breath.

PHIL. Ye are raving mad !  
Stark mad !

PER. Oh follow, follow through the night !  
The priestess moon ascends heaven's altar-stair  
To bless a world that draws its breath in sleep.  
Oh, silvery largess ! Star-distilling balm !  
Sister and queen of all the regal spheres,  
Generous as love and holier than death,  
White sorceress that witchest earth and sky  
To bind them with bright chains in one deep trance !  
Listen ! Upon the hills joy is awake  
And will not close an eye till morning break.  
Hail, sceptred train ! Hail ! Dance and pipe and  
chant !  
Warm on my breast I feel white bosoms pant !  
Forth, forth ; with flying feet shy bliss pursue ;  
Then welcome, madness, 'mid the stars and dew !

[*He rushes out.*

PHIL. I'll follow him, and nail this wildcat's skin,  
If I can take him, to her father's door.  
Is Auxerre mad ? And Ariane ? Away !  
I'll not believe she loves him !

[*Exeunt.*

## SCENE II

*The garden of a deserted manor. DENYS and ARIANE.*

DENYS. I hate the night because it hides thy face.

AR. And I the day that tears thee from my side.

DENYS. Night, lend thy wings, and with thee we'll  
keep pace,

For there is light enough with love for guide.

AR. Oh, I should mourn in heaven with thee away.

DENYS. And what is hell but when we bid adieu !

AR. Unpractised love, that made such long delay,

    Forging the little link 'twixt 'I' and 'you.'

DENYS. Give me thy lips : then on the ground we'll sit

    And thou shalt tell what drew thee to this bower.

AR. Where glow-worms pale their signal lanterns lit

    I flew, a dizzy moth, from flower to flower.

    The gossamers for me their clue unwound,

    The nightjar called me o'er the charmed ground.

[ARIANE sings.]

    Brindled bird with feathered claw

    Come and go on mothy wing ;

    Light upon the stubble-straw,

    Crouch a shade where shadows swing.

    Whip-poor-will, and Whip-poor-will,

    Make complaint from hill to hill.

*Enter FRANCES, PETRONILLA, BLANCHE, IMOGEN and the rest of their train.*

PET. Ghosts ! Ay, a pair of them ! Unwary love,

    That flitted hither where hobgoblins mew.

IMOGEN. Look, how Love writes the sequel to his masque

    While death looks o'er his shoulder ! Know you not

The place is haunted ?

[She sings.]

    Gibbet rafters, now let slip

    Bats a-gape with felon leer,

    Gap-toothed gum and tightened lip

    Grinning sin from ear to ear ;

Evil workings old and new  
Devil's errands let them do.

*PHILIP rushes in followed by ORME.*

PHIL. Devil, I do not know what ghost lurks here,  
But thine shall bear him company, unless  
Thy black soul tumble to a pit so deep,  
Though all the fiends make ladders of their backs,  
Thou canst not climb to God's glad world again.

AR. Now shall we witness valour's escalade !

I tell thee, hero, that the hope's forlorn !

What, we are neutrals, madman, you and I !

PHIL. Ay, mad : a moon-mocked wave drawn from  
grim deeps  
Thus, thus upon the rocks I dash my heart.

*[He flings himself at DENYS, but is pulled away.]*

Oh, God ! Oh, hell ! Oh—

ORME. Back !

PHIL. I come too late

To woo : and I have hung my harness up  
And weapons bright of honourable war,  
But with the blackest armour of revenge  
Fate clothes my soul.

ORME. Wert thou not drunk with love  
I'd reason with thee. Moonlight never kissed  
A naughtier blade. *[Takes his sword from him.]*  
Alack, that Hymen's torch  
Should shower such sleet for sparkles ! Come away ;  
To-morrow's sun will laugh at thee, and thou,  
Heart-whole, reck little of an aching brow.

*[He leads him away. The scene closes while the Bacchants sing.]*

Oh Love, thou hast given him nightshade wine,  
The poisoned heart, the maddened brain ;  
But we have drunk of the flask divine,  
Ours is the joy without the pain.

SCENE III

*A room in the Castle of Auxerre. AUXERRE, BISHOP, CLEOPHAS, PAINTERS, TAPISERS and other artists and craftsmen.*

AUX. A Baptist be it then ; but look you, friend,  
No gaunt enthusiast clamouring ' Repent,'  
But young, swarth-limbed, with honey-sweetened  
    lips,  
And dark-brown curls.

PAINT. At your command, my lord ;  
Yet I had thought the Israelitish spies  
Bearing the grapes of Eshcol on a staff :—  
The subject is—

AUX.                    Apt, but too obvious ;  
And stale moreover. Let the budding vine,  
With young green tendrils mingle with his curls,  
And he himself as joy's forerunner stand  
Half in the sunlight, half in shadow.

**PAINT.** Sir,  
Your wish shall be obeyed ; if my poor skill  
Can but approach what phantasy portrays,  
'Twill be a noble picture.

Aux. What hast thou ?

TAP. My lord, the drawing for the tapestry.  
Here I conceive him as the bird of God,  
Raphael, when the smoke-offended fiend  
Fled from Ecbatana to Egypt's bounds

The reek abhorred. I promise you, it curls  
 Voluminous, a dun with sulphur tinged,  
 Kindling to gold where the bright seraph's wing  
 Flashes in hot pursuit. The maid, installed  
 Upon a bed of down, silk-canopied  
 And laced with silver threads, awaits her spouse,  
 The enviable Tobias.

AUX.                    We'll hang this  
 In the guest-chamber where the Bishop sleeps ;  
 Sure, 'tis a scriptural theme.

BISH.                   Apocryphal,  
 My most dear lord, as the new gospel is  
 And its forerunner ; eh, my Cleophas ?  
 What saith the learnéd Grecian ?

CLEOPH.                Oh, my lord,  
 My business is with graven images,  
 And of divinity I know no more  
 Than can be hewn in stone.

AUX.                   Methinks this saint  
 Should find a place on our Cathedral front ;  
 There is an angle of the western tower  
 That lacks adornment : an uneasy perch  
 Save for seraphic foothold. How say ye, friend ?  
 Denys would grace it well.

CLEOPH.                I'll set him there  
 As I remember him one breathless day,  
 Towards the end of summer, when he sprang  
 Aloft to greet the coming rain : so clung  
 Among the scaffolding, his mantle cast,  
 A very swallow, bird-eyed, elfish ; pinned  
 Fanwise by the rushing wind to his house of clay.

*Enter an attendant.*

ATTEN. The Sieur de Chastellux desires admittance.

AUX. Conduct him hither. Come, my friends, pack traps

And hence : to-morrow we will meet again.

TAP. My lord, the tapestry were not complete

Without its sister-piece : the good old man

Tobit, his blinded eyes new-straked with gall,

Rejoices to behold his son ; the bride

Waits on her camel ; the white city dust

Takes fire and burns with dancing motes of gold

Where stands the indulgent angel.

AUX. By the spear

Of great Goliath, huge as weaver's beam,

I like this best of all ; treble the gold

With this ; be liberal, but not ostentatious ;

Subdue what's loud and let all shimmer soft

In a woven twilight.

TAP. My most duteous thanks.

[*Exeunt Sculptors, Painters, Tapisers, etc.*

*Enter PHILIP.*

AUX. Son Philip, I embrace you : welcome home !

PHIL. Not yet a son, though like to have my share

In promiscuity of kisses, if

Rumour speaks true.

AUX. All's fair in love and war.

You from the camp, from Spain, and must I teach  
you

The antique saw ? Why, once at Pampeluna—

You know the peach bloom ? just a stain of rose

Upon the sun-kissed curve ; and gold-brown eyes

Like bees in apple-blossoms. Do I touch you ?

What ? There are softer memories to bring

Back from the wars than spurs well won.

PHIL.

My lord,

I bring a challenge. I have come from one  
 Whose news are strange ; nor could I think them true  
 But that mine eyes bear witness, and your tongue  
 Affirms the general madness. Where will they end,  
 These Satan's Sabbaths when the sun is down,  
 That half convert the stars to wantonness ;  
 These limbs, vermillion in the shameless glare  
 Of prying torches, leaping unabashed  
 To cast unholy shadows on the hills ?  
 What of our laws defied ; our city gates  
 That should be shut from darkness till day-dawn  
 Flung wide : our holy men molested ; chased  
 Down the Cathedral wynd : while the mad crew,  
 Maids, matrons, youths plunge like the herd of  
 swine  
 In brimming Yonne, and frenzied shrieks are heard,  
 And peals of crazy laughter ?

AUX.

Thou hast learned

Thy lesson well ; 'tis Hermes' pupil speaks,  
 Monk Hermes, jealous of a rival's power.  
 Is there a devil in this vinedresser ?  
 Why, let him cast him out ; charm, countercharm ;  
 Monk's curse and devil's cantrap ! Silence, devil !  
 There, won't that quell ye ? But he's up again,  
 Still unsuppressed ; and faster than before  
 Patters the Lord's prayer backwards. By my faith,  
 There's magic in him : he can as surely find  
 The hidden spring as nuzzling babe the breast ;  
 He hath an owl that teaches him ; a wolf  
 Tame to his hand.

PHIL.

Then let him tame my lions ;

For I have brought a leash of them from Spain,  
 Maned beasts that once shook Atlas with their roar.

AUX. I would the scamp were here.

PHIL. If he be slain  
The devil hath his own ; and if he move  
Unhurt among the beasts, why God hath shut  
The lions' mouths.

AUX. Lord, what a hue and cry  
About a stolen kiss ! And yet the thief  
Deserves some chastisement—

BISH. Oh, my dear lord,  
But that I found you busy with a crowd  
Of painters, webbers, sculptors, I had urged—  
And blame myself for my too tardy speech  
That let the moment slip—yet discipline  
And age will lay such clogs upon our tongue—  
Yea, claimed the privilege of my holy office,  
And forced these questions home, which now,  
apposed

By my lord Philip, have no other answer  
Than to accept his challenge. You and I  
Have scarce perceived the growth of this disease  
Which in some measure taints our blood. But he  
And every comer cries out we are sick,  
The air we breathe infected. News of this  
May raise up instruments that God shall whet  
To punish not to heal : and in the day  
Of visitation storms that bend the grass  
Uproot the oak. As I would answer it  
To him who holds the keys, this heresy  
Which in my conscience long since stands condemned  
Must be destroyed. All things that God hath made  
May prove His will : and He that bade the fish  
Provide the tribute-money may declare  
His wrath and vengeance in the lion's mouth ;  
And without Him a sparrow cannot fall.

AUX. Psha ! I dissolve this holy synod ! Cant !  
 Hypocrisy ! What need of further lies ?  
 Ye have condemned the man already. Go !  
 Ye plague me with your importunity,  
 Your tags of scripture ! Have it as you will,  
 And after claim this as a prodigy,  
 A heaven-wrought miracle in aid of faith,  
 That two starved lions slew an unarmed man  
 And ate him too. Come hither, Ariane ;  
 Philip, the champion of Christendom,  
 Impatient waits to woo thee. Sparrows ! Pish !

[Exit.]

BISH. You see how variable his temper, Philip :  
 But thou shalt ply him in another mood  
 And bend his fiery rashness to thy purpose.

[Exit.]

*Enter ARIANE.*

AR. You sent for me—what is your will ?

PHIL. To tell thee  
 That thou canst damn or save. Hast thou no pity ?  
 Forgot are all thy maiden tendernesses,  
 Thy troth—

AR. I never plighted thee my troth,  
 And if I did—

PHIL. What then ?

AR. I here retract.  
 I do not love thee, Philip.

PHIL. Listen, girl.  
 Thou hast plucked up out of my heart all ruth ;  
 Wrought me to such distress that rage and hate  
 Make thee ten thousand times more dear than love.  
 I love thee more than life and hate thee more  
 Than everlasting hell.

AR. Strike with thy sword ;

Thou hissest murder—

PHIL. Thou shalt live : I know  
Whom I will strike ; and when he rots in earth  
I shall lie there where—

AR. Devil, I defy thee.

[Exit.]

PHIL. Oh hate, thou art more strong than love is weak,  
As hawks outsoar the lark that sings of love.  
Weak, wanton love ! thus do I spurn thee from me !

[He rushes out.]

#### SCENE IV

*The market-place. PETRONILLA, IMOGEN and BLANCHE with other girls at their stalls. ORME, PERUSE and BASKERVILLE.*

ORME. Dick, thou should'st be historian of the time ;  
Thou hast, methinks, the quaint inquirer's air,  
And well could'st write in passing foolish rhyme  
The crazy chronicle of old Auxerre.  
Sing first how Mars warped from his proper sphere  
Disturbs the order of the circling year,  
Wrenches earth's course awry, which being set  
For coasts where sleet and hail their arrows whet,  
Her canvas trimmed for winter, lo, she runs  
Wide on the wayward track of milder suns,  
And at a bound from roaring Autumn glides  
Into the haven where sweet Spring abides.

PER. To succour want, to share what I possess  
With hunger, age and needy nakedness—

ORME. Were, spite of heraldry, the true noblesse.

That's beyond cavil. Better days begin  
 When any salad-wench may tilt her chin  
 At young lords' beards. Here comes her ladyship.

*Enter DORIS.*

PER. Oh rare ! Oh sweet ! Oh pale as some white  
 slip

Of moonlight among pines ; or odours blown  
 From flowers unseen through forests dark and lone  
 Filled full with night. Now spring is in the lanes,  
 And link by link green weeds let down their chains  
 In brook and pool by frost no longer bound.

Where autumn's funeral leaves strew the dank  
 ground

The laughing winds that lightly come and go  
 Into pale fire the azure hyacinths blow.

There are no wrongs to right 'neath such a sky.  
 Maiden, with me wilt bid the world good-bye,  
 And never heed the hiss of sland'rous tongue ?

DORIS. Ah, wooing spring ! Ah, April fresh and young !

PER. We'll climb the down, and in some wooded height  
 Among green-filtered glades of golden light

Those moon-kissed blossoms pluck that shun the day.

DORIS. There the wild pigeons woo among the trees,  
 And yet, methinks, thou sweetlier woo'st than they.

PER. Nor know I any flower yields such heartsease  
 As Doris' lips. As fresh thou art as dew,  
 Or Amaryllis in apparel new  
 That tiptoe greets the morn.

[*Exeunt PERUSE and DORIS.*

ORME. And I remain  
 A bachelor. Well, well, the flower way's best  
 That leaves it all to bees and butterflies.

BASK. I am the man for weddings : I can throw  
 An old shoe over a marriage coach. Misfits  
 Worn easy ; there you have your married pair.

MARKET GIRLS. The monk, the monk !

*Enter DENYS and HERMES.*

HERMES. I'll tell thee what thou art :  
 A common lewd thief of poor girls' good names ;  
 The ape is virtuous compared with thee,  
 The dog lives clean. Thou womanish wanton, thou,  
 Is there no manhood in thee ? Thou the king  
 Of a new age ! A ragman's bag of vices  
 Whereof the cleanliest is cowardice !

DENYS. Why come to market with so curst a tongue ?  
 That's womanish : but since my lady loves me  
 I am grown deaf to hate and three parts blind  
 That nothing see but what is chaste and kind.

PET. Out, thou black-petticoated Satan's wife ;  
 The devil were the better for thy curses ;  
 Go, rail at him.

HER. Thy lady ! Easy won !  
 Why, ragamuffin, thou art No-man's son,  
 The heir-in-tail of a cast pedlar's pack ;  
 One civil grown by crying ' What d'ye lack ? '  
 And chucking chins : not fit among her suite  
 To follow simpering when she goes to meat,  
 Carrying her spaniel on a cushion. Oh,  
 That I had power to touch thy heart ; to show  
 As in a glass where all is mirrored true  
 How foul thou art, so fair to outward view.  
 Seven shapes I saw, each of abhorred sin,  
 That like the unclean spirits entered in,  
 Witchcraft, idolatry, concupiscence,

Drunkenness, heresy and indolence,  
 With murder breaking from the law's control,  
 These are the chosen comrades of thy soul.  
 For thou art he who drank to large excess  
 Of that old phial filled with wantonness,  
 (Would that it still were hidden in the tomb !)  
 Whose very sediment and hot perfume  
 Breeds pagan riot and dark earthy heat.  
 Thou art the enemy who in our wheat  
 Sowed tares, for which may God confound thee more !  
 May thy brief days be shortened, thy heart's core  
 Gnawed by the worm that feeds on mortal dust.  
 Great is thy sin, who for the body's lust  
 Dug up the insane shapes of shameless lies  
 Chained in the pit of hell twelve centuries,  
 Revived the gospel of the goat-god Pan  
 Piping to passion the weak heart of man,  
 Until earth's wickedness is grown so great  
 That God repenteth Him He did create  
 The breed of men, and though He hasteth not  
 The vials of His wrath are waxing hot,  
 His thunders stored for vengeance. In His name  
 I blight thee with my curse.

DENYS.

Hast thou no shame  
 Wronging the sweet air with such poisonous breath ?  
 But since thou talkest lightly of my death  
 Dost thou not fear to die ?

HER.

Yea, fear I have,  
 But of God's condemnation, not the grave  
 Nor the sharp pangs of dissolution.

DENYS.

Ay,  
 But to be torn asunder and to die,  
 As it were, limb by limb, a lion's claws  
 Raking thy tender skin ?

- HER. In Heaven's cause  
I would not shrink from a more hideous doom.
- DENYS. There is a glory in the martyr's tomb ;  
But if no blazing crown thy brow awaits  
Dar'st thou unlock the dreadful lion-gates,  
Walk in their midst, lay an untrembling hand  
Upon their shaggy necks ?
- HER. At God's command  
This were to me mere bliss.
- DENYS. So be it then.  
Walk with me naked in the lions' den  
And die the death thou seekest.
- HER. I accept  
The challenge.
- DENYS. Nay, this hap must be unwept ;  
Not worth a woman's tear. The darting sting  
Of wasp to you is a more dreaded thing  
Than I account the lion's greedy fang.
- BLANCHE. Oh, gentle Denys, on thy lips I hang  
As doth the bee with faint and hungry sense.  
Revive me then with richest eloquence,  
Sweet as the rush of April's honey-flow :  
The fragrance of thy breath on me bestow,  
And powder me with all thy perfumed gold.

[*The scene closes.*

## SCENE V

*Chastellux Castle. A paved courtyard thronged with the common people and connected by a stone stairway with a battlemented roof. AUXERRE, ARIANE, the BISHOP, PHILIP, ORME, JARNAC, MAYOR, MAYORESS, canons, monks and citizens look down from the battlements into a bear-pit, the gates of which open on the courtyard. Men-at-arms are stationed on the steps. DENYS and HERMES stand below among the crowd.*

AUX. Now to this business. Good Master Mayor,  
It likes me well that you have brought your spouse.  
She should be mother of a lion-brood.  
Pray you be seated.

MAYOR. I thank you, noble Sir ;  
Her father was a butcher ; sight of blood  
Ne'er made her sick or faint.

MAYORESS. Come, come, sit down,  
And don't be prating when a gentleman  
Gives leave to speak. He looks so pale, my lord,  
By reason of the flour, for he's a baker  
And 'tis a sickly trade.

AUX. A merry crowd !  
Some wear blue ribands in their hats, and some  
Black garters at the knee.

BISH. These are the friends  
Of holy Church, and the blue faction all  
Children of Satan.

AUX. Faith, they're the greater number !  
What do yon fellows there with pick and shovel ?  
Why do the mob so press them ?

JARNAC. Stand aside !  
Ralph, get you down and cleave that knot.

BISH. My lord,

They're busy with the grave.

AR. The grave ! Oh God !

AUX. Nay, never tell me common men lack courage !

What ? Stand on the very brink and never brench ?

Fat pullets are ye but the poultorer's wife

Bares a long arm to nab ye by the neck.

Tell me, what badge wear they that dig the grave ?

BISH. Both blue, my lord !

AUX. Slaves ! And the hole is dug

For the man that led them, whom they loved and  
worshipped,

Bare shoulder-high, proclaimed a demi-god !

Bishop, how will it be when you and I

Are coffined ?

BISH. My dear lord—

AUX. The thing's unseemly,

And it offends me, Philip, you have sunk

This butcher's blood-pit here before our eyes.

Thou seest how pale my daughter's cheek, and,  
faith,

Mine own grow something chalky.

PHIL. Pardon me,

But we are used to bury there our dogs,

If any bold tyke fall to the bear's claws

Or savage hug.

AUX. Now, by my sinful soul,

Right reverend bishop, and thy mitred locks,

I will make bold to take thee here to task.

Are we about a lawful business ? Speak,

As you would answer the Eternal Judge

Demanding *quo warranto*.

BISH. Hear me, Sir.

I take my stand upon inspired example ;

From innocent Isaac to the naughty babes  
That mocked Elisha ; from the prophet-hand  
Of Samuel reeking hot with Agag's blood  
To Cyril hardening his saintly heart  
To slaughter virgins, ay, and flay them too,  
None that serve God dare shrink from shedding  
blood.

Moreover, Daniel—

Aux. Oh, sir, content you !  
BISH. Nay, I am not content. What saith the Psalm ?  
The lions roaring after their prey do seek  
Their meat from God. What meat ? A kid, a fawn,  
A hind, an antlered stag, a heretic ?  
God will provide. What men term accidents  
Are textile with the fabric. Doth God's eye  
Err, His hand stray, that He should patch the web  
With faults and blemishes ? We make appeal  
To Him who hears the hungry lions roar.  
Shall He not much more hear the famished cry  
Of His own flock ?

*HER. (pushing past the men-at-arms and ascending the steps).* Hear me, my lord Auxerre,  
And you, most reverend father : let God show  
The meanest of His servants dares as much  
As Satan's chosen captain. I will walk  
Unarmed among the lions. If I shrink  
How shall I tremble at Christ's judgment-seat !

Aux. Come, you shall bait a badger or a bear ;  
Wouldst make a Nero of me ?

DENYS. Good my lord,  
I meant a show to make a merry Easter,  
Not a sad bout with Satan.

Aux. Out upon it,  
I care not if hell wins. Let them cast lots

For who shall enter first.

[*The lot falls on DENYS.*

So ; Denys has it.

You, Philip, certify to all assembled  
That none had access to these beasts of thine  
Save their own keeper for this sc'night past.

PHIL. I certify and will confirm on oath,  
If necessary, that since Easter Eve  
They have not broke their fast.

AUX. Why then, proceed.

PHIL. Let me advise that both be strictly searched  
Before they enter, lest or knife or drug  
Concealed upon their persons either slay  
These rough-voiced arbiters of human guilt,  
Or, like the sop in Cerberus' triple jaws  
Make them forget their natures, and lie down  
Harmless as sleeping dogs.

AUX. It shall be so.  
Let them be searched.

[JARNAC and men-at-arms search DENYS and HERMES.

JAR. My lord, there's nothing here.  
MAN-AT-ARMS. Nor here.

JAR. There's neither dagger, blade nor charm  
Nor drug concealed upon them.

PHIL. Hold, my lord,  
For I have heard of an enchanted gem  
Which in the arm 'twixt skin and flesh enclosed  
Shields from wild beasts the naked Indian.  
Let them be stripped.

ORME. Truly a wise precaution.  
A mirror or a piece of polished steel,  
Such as this monk might use to trim his beard by,  
Had else befooled us all. For 'tis well known

These great grim cats cannot endure the sight  
Of their own whiskers.

[*Men-at-arms strip DENYS and HERMES.*

JAR. (*after further search*). There's nor seam nor scar  
Nor other stitches of such broidery  
Upon their limbs.

PHIL. Let them go naked in  
And not resume their clothes.

AUX. So 'twas agreed.  
Jarnac, unbolt these beasts.

JAR. Please you, my lord,  
Shall both be loosed at once ? One were enough  
For such a springald.

AUX. Wind up the chains, I say !  
Denys, ascend, for thou must enter first.

[*Guards wind up the chains which lift the iron hatches.*  
*As DENYS ascends the steps and climbs down into the pit HERMES and ARIANE kneel in prayer.*

ORME. How without guidance can a poor dumb beast  
Know which of these petitions to obey ?  
Now would I not be heaven's almoner  
For half of Peter's fees.

[*A lion roars.*

DENYS (*from the pit*). A rope ! A rope !  
Give me a rope, good officer.

[*An officer seeking for a rope picks up HERMES' girdle and throws it to DENYS.*

PHIL. Sorcery ! Sorcery ! Set the gates wide ! Make  
way !

[*AUXERRE and all the notables on the roof descend the steps to the courtyard ; the gates are flung open by the men-at-arms and DENYS comes forth with the two lions leashed in the monk's girdle.*

PHIL. Now by the sepulchre of Christ, I swear,  
Since Maundy Thursday they've not tasted meat.

DENYS. My lord, you said but now 'twas Easter Eve,  
Aye, and proclaimed you'd take your oath of it.  
You have o'erreached yourself. These savage beasts  
Whose appetite you treacherously did whet  
That they might drink my blood, are grown so weak  
My lady here might pat them.

AR. Gentle beasts !

Oh, I could fling my arms about your necks,  
Deck you with garlands such as Mænads hung  
On Bacchus' pards ! Shout, shout your Evoes !  
Hail to thee, Denys ! Lead him through the streets,  
And make this day his happy festival.

[DENYS leads the lions among the people, who follow him  
to the town singing.

Oh, braver than Bethlehem's shepherd !

Oh, wiser than Babylon's sage !

The wolf and the lynx and the leopard

Their fury assuage !

The hunger and hate thou abhorrest

Like lions shall couch at thy knee,

And fear that is lord of the forest

Be vassal to thee !

## ACT II

### SCENE I

*A room in Auxerre Castle.* AUXERRE and PHILIP.

AUXERRE. She will not have thee, Philip ? Well, well, well.

A man of mettle, Philip, should contract  
Marriage as statesmen do alliances  
Where policy commands. Lord, don't I know  
That there are men so-called, uxorious slaves,  
Fellows whose soft wits love has stolen away  
And left them fond to foolishness ! A vice,  
Yea, by the gods, a vice that saps their strength  
And gives the advantage to their enemies.  
Be not thou one of them, but let the hours  
Move to a steady shaping of thine ends ;  
So on the council-chamber of thy heart  
Love like the painted ceiling shall look down,  
A thing admired when seldom leisure serves,  
Unheeded when great deeds are in debate.

PHILIP. She sums all purposes, and without her  
There's nothing worth the striving.

AUX. Body of me,  
She's flesh and blood and weighed by avoirdupois ;  
In winter I have heard her blow her nose,  
And by these signs do verily believe  
She is not kneaded out of snow and fire,

Nor yet imparadised and beyond reach  
Of Satan's bird-bolts.

PHIL. A week ago, my lord,  
I should have chafed at such disparagement,  
Impatiently rejected any praise  
That did not sound her flawless, sans-pareil.  
But where the air is tainted, even in sleep  
We may draw in contagion with our breath.  
Sir, I much fear lest she have caught the plague.

AUX. How mean you ?

PHIL. To be plain with you, my lord,  
'Tis common talk that Denys hath cast his spell  
Upon your daughter.

AUX. What ! This vinedresser,  
This slave, this clod, this bit of sunburnt earth !  
PHIL. Even he that could beguile you to forget  
His baseness and ennable appetite  
With dignities that would become a god.  
But there is more to follow.

AUX. Speak : leave not out  
A single letter of his infamy.

PHIL. She, sir, 'tis said, regards with favouring eye  
His suit ; to sum up all, this mountebank  
Aims at your daughter and your seigneuralty,  
Perhaps your life, for he devotes to death  
With charms as potent as he woos to love.

AUX. You have said enough. Go ; leave me to my  
thoughts.

[PHILIP retires.

Who stirs ?

*An attendant enters.*

Go, fellow, fetch thy mistress hither.

[Exit attendant.

This sword thrust home shall be a spur to deeds  
Of vengeance and of reparation. I,  
That should have tutored youth, and with the  
scourge  
Of my authority chastised excess,  
Have given my blessing where I owed a curse,  
Countenancing that which I have not rebuked,  
Yea, been in some sort master of these revels.  
But now—

*Enter ARIANE.*

Come hither, child. Into what snare  
Hath crept the fledgling bird of thy young love ?  
You drop your eyes ; you cannot answer me,  
But your dumb looks loudly inform against you.  
It is that same damned wizard who bewitched  
Your father's senses : he who drew so wide  
His magic circle, that it compassed in  
Auxerre and all that it contains. But now  
I do repent me that I ever set  
The seal of my approval on him. Here  
I utterly abjure him, as a villain,  
Banned and beyond the pale of law, accursed,  
And with his life he pays for his misdeeds.

AR. Oh, do not lend yourself to calumny  
To wield the murderer's knife she fears to draw.  
Nothing, I swear, that might not well become  
My mother, when first to her blushing self  
She made avowal of her love—

AUX. Thy mother !  
See how the poison works ! 'Twas justly said  
The very air is fraught with pestilence.  
Girl, thou'rt bewitched. Thy cousin Philip's noble,  
And thou preferr'st a peasant ; honourable,

Thy choice is on a filthy libertine ;  
Philip comes home a soldier cased in steel,  
A captain and a valiant gentleman ;  
Thou keep'st thy kisses for a wanton boy  
For whom some injured husband's dagger waits  
To stab him through adulterous pillows. Philip !

[PHILIP advances.

This mischief breeds apace like blight in June.  
To-day—at sunset—in the market-place  
Where gnats swarm thickest—buzz their loudest—go  
And thin them like the beak of hawking bird.  
For by my soul this get of mine own loins,  
That would disgrace me, shall not bastardize  
The honour of my house—will she or will she not  
I'll make her thine. And Denys at thy hands  
Shall have his patent of nobility.  
Count of Auxerre ! Not that, not that, ye gods !

[*Excunt AUXERRE and PHILIP.*

AR. My curses on that long white loveless face !  
'Tis he hath played upon my father's heart.  
Oh, they are mad who seek to trample out  
My sunbeam, as men do some mischievous spark  
That means to set the mountains in a blaze.  
Merciful heavens ! Show me a way to save him !

[*Exit ARIANE.*

## SCENE II

*The market-place by the river-side. In the background the west front of the Cathedral with scaffolding on which stone-carvers and other craftsmen are at work. The sun sets and it grows dark during this scene.*

*Enter PERUSE and DORIS followed by ORME and BASKERVILLE.*

PERUSE. We have given ourselves to her strong hand,  
who guides

The exultant stars, that press for ever on,  
Now in the sun's exceeding glory veiled,  
Now visibly companioned by the moon,  
Cold spouse of ice and bride of glittering snow ;  
To her who chariots the wheeling world  
Through space and time, sister infinities ;  
Her in whose name dim eastward peaks receive  
The rosy baptism of returning day,  
And sleepless streams that travel all night long  
In darkness, drink the golden cup of dawn,  
With azure mixed, and with that draught brimful  
Check their charmed waters, that forget to flow  
And all the toil wherewith they reach the sea.  
Oh, Doris, we have worshipped in the woods,  
And with the incense of the meadow flowers  
Mingled our own thanksgivings : Nature heard  
And we have shared her blessing.

ORME. On my word,  
A pretty tale of Daphne and the laurels !  
Nature I love, but don't admire her morals.  
Good M and N remember 'mid your rushes  
And suns and stars, man is a beast that blushes.

PER.

There's no grace

Of font or cup, of consecrating hands  
 Or pentecostal spirit, like the breath  
 Of the sweet breeze beneath the summer sky,  
 When the deep windows of the soul unclose  
 And all our senses are as doors set wide,  
 And every moment is a messenger,  
 Whose feet bring in glad tidings. Blessed Time,  
 Bright stars that watch the reawakening day,  
 The primal bliss regained, lost long ago  
 When man his naked innocence forsook.

ORME. Come, come, no juggling with the Pentateuch !

You will not find the equal of the oyster  
 For continence, in castle, hut or cloister.  
 Besides, those fig-leaf times must give us pause ;  
 We must fix bounds to sumptuary laws ;  
 And I for one dislike the fashions scanty  
 Of our first parents, delicto flagrante :  
 Mere nudity betrays what Art misshapes,  
 Although no doubt it suits arboreal apes.

DORIS. Oh, love, the world is changed ;

Man, no more estranged,  
 Weeps not nor wastes his few brief years in sorrow ;  
 Humbling his restless pride,  
 The goods the gods provide  
 He takes, and asks no bounty of to-morrow ;  
 With birds and beasts earth's bliss he shares  
 And seeks no far-off Heaven, nor other life than  
 theirs.

PER. Out of the womb of night

He comes into the light,  
 Springing awhile upon the sunny grass ;  
 'Mid flowers and twinkling blades,  
 A flower himself he fades,

Gone like a sunbeam when the shadows pass ;  
Earth's sojourner, Time's fleeting guest ;  
Rich is the banquet spread, and long the welcome rest.

DORIS. Who would change these skies  
For hues of Paradise,  
Or what of bliss untried Elysium yields ?  
Not fabled asphodel  
Nor amaranth excel  
The homely blossoms of our native fields ;  
Pale ghosts if any wander there  
Pine for their sunny home in realms of upper air.

PER. Here pleasure lives unblamed ;  
Earth naked nor ashamed,  
Hideth no more a guilty front with snow ;  
But lays her bosom bare  
To the soft-wooing air,  
And inly feels the warm sun's fruitful glow,  
That her rich womb divinely feeds,  
And fills with quickening life all that her bosom  
breeds.

DORIS. As into seas that sleep  
Wide-branching rivers sweep  
The loamy wealth of mountain-girdled lands,  
Clouding the azure brine  
With colours opaline,  
The crumbling ore of all their margent sands ;  
A milder sun distils his beams,  
And drops a tinctured gold in heaven's crystalline  
streams.

PER. And when the day hath bowed  
His head through night's dark cloud,  
A shining wonder in the west succeeds ;  
Where in the twilight sky,  
Thick with heaven's chivalry,

Mars through the dark his starry cohorts leads ;  
 Not now to threaten or appal,  
 He wears his crimson mail to grace earth's festival.

The wreathéd barges glide  
 Deep laden on the tide ;  
 The water plashes to the lazy oar ;  
 With sound of dancing feet,  
 Faint bursts of music sweet  
 Float in soft cadence to the reedy shore ;  
 The south winds toss the olives gray,  
 And the ripe vineyards bask in the last beam of day.

Then sing the Age of gold,  
 Cumæan lore foretold :  
 When Autumn reaches forth his hand to Spring,  
 Let no divorcing snows  
 Of winter interpose,  
 But tender skies to full fruition bring  
 The budding leaf, the lengthening spray,  
 And all the forward shoots that dream of coming May.

ORME. My conscience ! that's extremely fine ;  
 I would not alter half a line ;  
 You've taken Hell-gates off their hinges,  
 And quenched the fire that sinners singes.  
 The little gods, in merry rout,  
 Lar, Lemur, Faun, come tumbling out,  
 And hornéd satyrs gaily prance,  
 Long used on burning coals to dance,  
 Too glad to cool a scorching rump  
 On grass-grown bank or mossy stump.

*[During the last speech a barge, rowed by men and women and loaded with fruit, has come to the quay. They disembark and sing.]*

GIRLS. Gather in the wheat and rye,  
     Gather in the barley ;  
 Where the sheaves are tossed on high  
     Lovers' eyes hold parley.

Gather in the purple grape,  
     Gather in the golden ;  
 Tendrilled curls that will escape  
     Lovers' lips embolden.

Where the ruddy liquor brims  
     Foaming in the presses,  
 Bacchus stains sweet lovers' limbs,  
     Bacchus stains their kisses.

Welling azure, welling gold,  
     Down the river marges,  
 Full and broad the stream is rolled,  
     'Gainst our bluff-bowed barges.

Life's a stream : then let it flow,  
     Cloudless heavens glassing,  
 Golden hours that come and go,  
     With no sense of passing.

*The WORKMEN on the scaffold.*

Up the ladder, dizzy-slanted,  
     With our heavy hods we climb ;  
 Wheresoe'er the scaffold's planted  
     You may hear our trowels chime.

MARKET GIRLS. Come, you hewers, dusty-throated,  
     White as millers mealy-coated,  
 Leave the chisel, leave the mallet,  
     Here are dainties for your palate ;  
 Here are orbs of ivory tinctured,

Scarlet, black and purple-cinctured :  
Open, golden-lidded vases,  
Show your rubies, chrysoprases ;  
Amethystine ichor bleeds  
In the ripe pomegranate seeds.

A STONE-CARVER (*above*). Mates, what say you ? I  
for one

Pity poor Pygmalion.  
Living lips had he e'er tasted,  
He had surely never wasted  
Kisses on a block of stone.  
Let some master worn and weary,  
Quavering a miserere,  
Shape in marble everlasting  
Stephen stoned or Jerome fasting,  
Scentless flowers, frozen pleasures,  
Chastity that keeps its treasures  
Locked within a marble zone.  
These are senseless things we fashion,  
Cheeks that never burned with passion,  
Arms upon cold bosoms folded,  
Lips in loveless beauty moulded,  
Martyrs praying prayers unuttered,  
Garments by no breezes fluttered,  
Alb and amice, cope and crozier,  
Cowl and veil and scapulary ;  
Give me something warmer, rosier,  
Give me laughter, live and merry,  
Lips where I may press my own.

A WORKMAN. Down the ladders, rung by rung,  
Swarm and scramble—on you go !

ANOTHER. Wheresoe'er a rope is hung  
That's the way to travel—so !

[All descend pell-mell.]

ORME. They all rush past me—a most noble bird  
 Gaudily plumed and elegantly spurred ;  
 Must I not scratch where they scratch, be debarred  
 From the sweet pleasures of the poultry-yard,  
 And where the dunghill odours blow  
 In lonely splendour flap and crow ?

[He dances fantastically.]

PET. He's got the holy vertigo !

ORME. I've seen a ghost : it stands in view of all,  
 In the long chestnut walk a sapling tall,  
 A single tree (how could the thing escape us ?)  
 Bare as a boggart or the god Priapus !

BASK. Then tighten your girdle

Till Winter has dined !  
 Sing, ho, the chinked hurdle,  
 The wolf's in the wind !

ORME. Oho ! brave times brave juices breed !

Come, jolly grape, our friend in need,  
 Come, drunken gaoler, thou that turn'st the key  
 On the dull guards and sett'st the prisoners free,  
 Till in red riot leaping to the stars  
 They roar like flame that bursts from dungeon-bars !

ALL. Alas !

*Enter DENYS.*

DENYS. What is this cry of grief ?

PET. We're wailing for the turning leaf,  
 That summer should succeed to spring  
 And autumn follow harvesting,  
 That after plenty comes distress,  
 And after laughter heaviness,  
 And after love satiety,  
 And in the midst of life to die :  
 That this long respite was a cheat,

That none with Time or Fate may treat  
Since Death that will no parley hold  
Lay ambushed for the Age of Gold.

DENYS. Go, some of you, and ring a peal !  
Make the fretted belfries reel ;  
Rooks and jackdaws, round and round  
Tumble madly to the sound !  
And, ye holy idols, break  
Your stony fast for joy's sweet sake !  
Quit your niches casting down  
Crook and cross and martyr's crown ;  
New saints, old saints, saints half-carved,  
Abbot plump and hermit starved,  
Saints embrowned and weather-beaten,  
Saints whose rags the breezes sweeten,  
Whole, dismembered, shod or bare,  
Come and foot it in the square !  
Dance until your marble grain  
Throbs quick fire in every vein,  
Dead with living, flesh with stone :  
Dance till backward-flowing Yonne  
Summon from their far sea-caves  
Yesterday's astonished waves ;  
Dance the metal from the mine,  
Dance the clusters from the vine,  
Dance the moth from her dark cell,  
Dance the chicken from its shell,  
Cub from litter, calf from cow ;  
Dance the leaves off twig and bough,  
Dance them bare in wood and glen,  
Dance till they bud green again !

[He tosses a ball into the square ; a wild dance begins ;  
the bells ring out, the ball flies to and fro, monks and  
canons issuing from the precincts join in the sport

THE CLERGY. Orientem oculis,  
 Hesperum pererra,  
 Urbes amoenissimas  
 Quotquot sint in terra,  
 Gloriosum ceteris  
 Lumen est Auxerra.  
 Non videntur inopes  
 Nec jejunum genus,  
 Hic esurientium  
 Omnis venter plenus,  
 Bacchus lenit stomachum,  
 Lenit corda Venus.  
 Vinum cella premitur,  
 Nummus implet arcum,  
 Nummis nos et dolis  
 Mitigamus Parcum,  
 Ergo non auferimur  
 In Charonis barcam.  
 Ave, ætas aurea  
 Reducis Saturni,  
 Solvat deus vincula  
 Frigoris hiberni,  
 Æternumque janua  
 Clausa sit Averni !

THE LAITY. Shout, drunken bells, tower- and turret-shakers,  
 Clash as ye meet with music in your blows,  
 Wild northern war, a sea-fight 'mid the breakers,  
 Battle-shock and battle-song while the red wine flows!  
 Burst like a flower with music in each petal,  
 Break like a shower of meteoric sound,  
 Bay, deep-mouthed dogs with throat and tongue of metal,  
 Circle, wild birds, on wings of clangour round !

Dance, giant bells, to feast and laughter bidden !  
 When ye rejoice the clouds' cold valleys hear,  
 And ancient hills with earthquake-thunder chidden  
 Rise from their seats and answer with a cheer.

*Enter ARIANE on horseback : the bell drops ; the bells stop ; the crowd stands still. She advances to DENYS.*

ARIANE. Delay not ! Hence ! Philip—young Chastellux—

Is at your gate ! Go, go ; they swear to take  
 Your life, he and his men-at-arms ! I came  
 To warn you ; there is time ! Oh, how I rode !  
 He watched me from the castle window, guessed  
 My errand and pursued. Away ! I hear  
 His horses' hoofs.

DENYS. How beautiful she is !

[DENYS pauses for an instant gazing at her ; then turns away, springs up the scaffolding and disappears.  
 PHILIP with JARNAC and his men-at-arms gallop in.

PHILIP. Dismount, look to the lady, Jarnac ; Ralph,  
 With Edmund, Nicholas and William, climb  
 The scaffolding ; to the third tier, you fools ;  
 What, are you blind and have you shed your eyes  
 Spurring so fast ? Just there he vanished ; caught  
 His cloak and left a shred of it hanging.

ORME. Ah !

Doubtless on one of Moses' horns, exalted  
 To mark the spot where cacodæmon vaulted.  
 I pity those poor horns ; their fate is odd,  
 Serving as cloak-pegs for a pagan god.

PHIL. Enough, sir. Madam, unless your ladyship  
 Prefers to ride alone, your escort waits.

CROWD. No, no ; we won't allow it ; we'll escort her !

A MASON. She doesn't want this lordling, I can see ;

We'll take her to her father ; were't ten mile,

Hop, skip and jump, I'd go with her.

AR.

Come then,

And my dear thanks be yours.

[*Exit with crowd.*

RALPH (*returning with the others*). Clerestory, crypt,  
Vault, gallery, platform, tower and fretted tomb,  
Aisle, transept, chapel, we have searched them all  
And he is nowhere to be found.

PHIL. What say you ?

RALPH. My lord, he has escaped us.

PHIL. Wretched tools !

Where were your crossbows when he scaled the  
towers ?

Good God, you might have winged him then !

ORME. A bat !

A little vermined bat, the abortion of an ape

The devil pitied and gave wings to ! Hist !

A swarm, a swarm ! By horned Acheron

And thin-ribbed ghosts that flit on Lethe's bank,

You hit me, sir ! Here's magic for you then,

Reverendissime ! The sport grows rough

When priest and laic play at blindman's buff !

[*A scene of wild disorder ensues, priests and laity,  
soldiers and citizens tumbling over each other in the  
deepening twilight.*

## SCENE III

*A room in Auxerre Castle.* AUXERRE and HERMES.

AUXERRE. I'll pitch the statues in the river-bed ;  
 The powdered dust of jewelled glass I'll scatter  
 Wide o'er its wave : I'll found a holy league,  
 A guild of idol-breakers ; they shall range  
 The city like destroying angels ; smite  
 The first-born of our fleshly lusts, the bronze  
 And marble breed of Paphians, the curled boys,  
 The eagles, swans, bulls, centaurs, satyrs, Fauns ;  
 These bubbles of the lecher's boiling heart  
 I'll burst, and pour the desecrated lees  
 Into the common sewer.

HERMES. My lord—my lord,  
 The house of God—Earth's dedicated glories—  
 AUX. The house of God ! a carven stumbling-block  
 Piled on the road to heaven ; away with it !  
 Death to the tempter whose lascivious pipe  
 Hath given lubricity a shape in stone  
 And made God's house accursed !

HER. Man's handiwork  
 You may break down, though consecrate to God :  
 The sin were not so heinous : to destroy  
 The guiltiest wretch in God's own image made  
 And send the soul unrescued back to Him,  
 Were most presumptuous murder. Will you play  
 The persecutor to revive the Faith,  
 Using the bloody weapons of old Rome,  
 Mad 'gainst the Cross, to win a soul for Christ ?  
 Here's an exchange of parts to make hell merry  
 And angels doubt heaven's scheme to save mankind.  
 Oh, do no murder in the name of love.

Murder is hate ; and hate is hideous :  
Even Satan hides it when he tempts to fall.  
God has not made this world so fair that we  
Might turn away, and hide a tear-stained face  
On the uncomfortable breast of pain  
And death. He errs who cannot say ' Amen '  
To the divine approval of God's works  
That He Himself pronounced ; and He took pains  
To please our mortal sense Who made the rose  
Filling the world with odours.

Aux. Plague upon it,  
Where is your zeal that lately leapt so high,  
With tongues of angry fire?

Aux. Fool monk, others have fastened on him now  
And will not let him go. Listen ! They drag  
His headless carcase hither ! Filthy hounds,  
I hear ye ! What's your drift ?

[A confused noise of singing and shouting is heard without : they move to the window.

THE CROWD (*without*). Stirrup of silver and cheekpiece  
of gold,  
Footcloth of scarlet with pearl-broidered fold,  
Ribbons and favours to tie in thy mane,  
Bells of sweet cadence to hang on thy rein,  
Plentiful pasture, of corn a full sack ;

None but thy mistress to ride on thy back ;  
With voice and with hand to caress the proud steed  
That bore her so well in the hour of her need ;  
An angel of succour, deliverer, hailed  
In the light of her love, by love's peril unveiled.  
He sued not, he sighed not ; nor knelt on his knee :  
A silent betrothal hath given him to thee.  
Then fear not, bright lady : though torn from thy  
    side,  
Whom danger has plighted, hate shall not divide :  
In the spring like a flower he shall lift up his head ;  
The joy-bells shall ring : whom thou lov'st thou  
    shalt wed ;  
And thy tender young bosom as fruitful as fair  
Shall blossom like May with the hope of Auxerre.

*Enter PERUSE, DORIS, ARIANE.*

PERUSE. My lord—

AUX. Well, Sir, what is your will ? You come  
At an unseasonable hour : bring  
A rabble at your heels, whose insolence  
Bespeaks them drunk and dangerous : that lady  
I do not know ; and am ashamed to own  
This for my daughter : panting, blushing, bloused  
As any farm lass, hired o' market days,  
After a romp beneath the harvest-moon.

PER. Your people wish me to acquaint you, Sir,  
That Philip Chastellux, armed men at his back,  
Rode down this evening to the market-place,  
Meaning to murder Denys, but in good time  
Your daughter saved him—

AUX. To your chamber, girl !  
Away I say !

[*Exit ARIANE.*

Bring me some wine there : rage  
Shakes my old limbs like fever—

[*Wine is brought by an attendant.*

PER. Pardon, my lord :

I will defer what else I have to say.

AUX. Defer ? Defer ? No, no : I'll hear it now :  
Give me more wine : proceed.

PER. The citizens

Are jealous for his safety : they demand  
Your present promise to protect him : next—  
In this dear cause we ask the dearest bond—  
The marriage of the lady Ariane,  
With him whose sole possession is the love  
Of every man and woman in Auxerre,  
The centre of our hopes—

AUX. (*bursts into wild laughter*). I have been drunk,  
Said I not so ? And you, it seems, were fools ;  
Fools to believe a drunkard's promises.  
Think you that such are binding in the law ?  
By God, but I will prove a sober judge !  
No fear, no favour, and not much ill will ;  
But just enough to edge the sword of justice  
And make the headsman do his duty. Quick  
(To the attendant) Let the west tower be manned !  
Send Jarnac here—

[*Exit attendant.*

They shall have answer sharp and to the point :  
Winged words, my merry masters ! (*Shouting*) Man  
the keep !  
Let every loophole send an arrow forth !

*Enter JARNAC.*

Send word to Philip Chastellux : tell him  
To fall upon this rabble in their flight !  
They must be swinged a little here, good Jarnac,  
But he shall deal such bounteous measure to them  
That they shall thank me for my tender mercies.  
Monk, to the bishop's palace, and entreat  
His instant presence.

[*Exeunt.*

[*A confused noise is heard without ; words of command, twanging of bowstrings, cries of wounded men, and finally the sound of the mob in full retreat.*

#### SCENE IV

*The same. Midnight. Storm. AUXERRE,  
BISHOP, JARNAC.*

BISHOP. My counsel is that you declare him dead ;  
Civilly dead undoubtedly he is,  
Being under ban, and forfeit of his life.  
It wants but a few days of this wild weather  
And hunger will make good the law's decree :  
If not, for he may find some sustenance  
In roots and woodland berries, your strict search  
Will hunt him out and slay him secretly :  
The hole where he shall rot will tell no tales.

AUXERRE. I fear the effect of this upon the people.  
BISH. Leave it to me : the brief announcement made,  
As of a thing that touches their old sins  
Repented of and pardoned, dwelt upon  
No more than serves to tell them the event,

I'll pass to other matter : give no time  
 For yeasty thought to swell their lumpish brains.  
 Yesterday's madness wrought in sight of all  
 We must undo, and in the selfsame place  
 Before the very eyes that witnessed it.

Will it please you call your daughter hither ?

AUX.

Jarnac,

Summon the lady Ariane.

[*Exit JARNAC.*

BISH. My lord,  
 The spiritual father's task begins  
 When fleshly parents err ; and you shall see  
 How sweetly she will bend to discipline  
 Firmly but not unfeelingly enforced.  
 I will restore you an obedient child  
 And give a bride to Philip Chastellux.

AUX. The storm grows loud : hark, how the thunder  
 growls.

BISH. The voice of the Lord is in the waterfloods ;  
 The winds are angels of His wrath.

AUX. I pray you,  
 Be tender to my child.

BISH. Such tenderness  
 I'll use, my lord, as best consorts with wisdom  
 And her soul's health.

*Enter ARIANE and JARNAC.*

AUX. The pity she should need  
 Such bitter medicine ; drink of it so young.  
 But all our woes are by death's sufferance,  
 And we endure only till we are made  
 A thing too mean for grief.

ARIANE. You speak of death

Where many dead men lie unburied. Kill  
Me too. Why should I linger out till day  
These few dark hours, while the giant night  
Wounded and gashed with angry lightning dies,  
That I may see to-morrow light a world  
New-trenched with graves, cumbered with mortal  
heaps  
That once were living men ?

## ARIANE SWOONS.

Aux. Bishop, I gave no warranty for this :  
Poor child, poor child ! If I had had the time  
I would have weaned thee, sweet, by slow degrees  
From thy bad choice : and drop by drop have  
    poured  
Into thy blood such blessed antidotes  
As would have killed by gradual certain death  
The poison lurking there : but now, had reason  
The mastery of passion's eloquence,  
It were of no avail. She's dead.

BISH. A swoon,  
A swoon ! You talk too readily of death.  
Jarnac, go call her women hither : tush !  
A little water and a cordial,  
A ribbon loosened and a lace untied,  
And all will soon be well.

[Enter several women who carry away ARIANE, AUXERRE and the BISHOP following.

## ACT III

### SCENE I

*The market-place. Some of the niches in the Cathedral front are empty, and broken fragments of statuary lie strewn upon the ground. A few idlers are gathered in the square. Enter ORME and BASKERVILLE.*

ORME. How say you, Baskerville ? True verdict give ;

Was this the act of God ?

BASK. Why, to my thinking  
The devil's in it when saints leave their niches  
And turn to warlocks, dancing with the witches.

ORME. Truly, a question in theology  
None but seraphic jurymen can solve.

BASK. Then bring it in as death by misadventure,  
It were a scandal else. Here's Stephen's ribs  
Complain of battery, and Barnabas  
Cries out for plaster for a broken nose.

ORME. That will not serve ; for what can't be  
Heaven's will

Satan must bear the blame of, Baskerville.

[IMOGEN, PETRONILLA, FRANCES and BLANCHE enter  
slowly, one by one. *The Cathedral bell tolls.*

IMOGEN. How silent is the market-place ; how drear  
The empty scaffold rising tier on tier !

No laughter now, no song ; no merry sound  
 Of trowel or the hammer's sharp rebound  
 Ringing upon the chisel ; but the knell  
 And solemn note of the slow funeral bell  
 That floats with laggard wing from tower to tower  
 As if the hand of death beat Time's last hour,  
 And nevermore should joyful peal be rung  
 Or sweet-toned chime.

PETRONILLA.                    Hark ! Oh, thou iron tongue,  
                                   Wail loud ! Thou can't not utter half our woe.

BLANCHE. See ! Towards the chapter-house with  
                                   footstep slow  
                                   The canons cross the square.

[*The clergy cross the Cathedral precincts.*

IMOGEN.                        Mass must be said  
                                   And solemn requiems chanted for the dead.

BASK. I came with a penny to purchase a mass ;  
                                   I came with my fortune to marry a lass ;  
                                   For where so well can a shepherd choose  
                                   As here in the market among the ewes ?

*A VINEDRESSER enters excitedly.*

VINEDRESSER. Hold, hold, my masters, give me leave  
                                   to speak !

You all have heard of famous Romanée,  
 Mother of grapes that make our noblest wine,  
 Pride of Auxerre : a storm of icy hail  
 Swept over it last night : and as I judge  
 Twelve acres will scarce yield the wealth of one.  
 The rich ripe clusters lie upon the ground  
 Mere food for grubs and worms. When you were  
                                   mad  
 I feared to speak, but now I boldly say,

You were bewitched, ay, one and all of you,  
 By Denys l'Auxerrois. So fair they seem,  
 These spirits can be mischievous : three years  
 He wound his delicate snares about your feet,  
 And sunned himself in favours : but now all's  
 changed :

His fickle spirit veering like the wind  
 Blows plagues upon you : first upon your lord  
 He sends a moody madness craving blood,  
 Then makes the slow-paced Yonne a roaring flood  
 Filled with the sky's spent rage : while hail and rain  
 Ravage the earth.

A CITIZEN. I partly think thee right—  
 Unless it were God's vengeance—

VINEDRESSER. Did God urge  
 Auxerre to murder ? Did He turn His hand  
 Against His own house ; and from their holy seats  
 Cast down these sculptured stones ?

BASK. The cloak is gone.

ORME. Mark that ; the cloak—

A CITIZEN. For sure the cloak can't lie.  
 Who'd take it but himself that hung it there ?  
 He's damned by that.

BASK. 'Tis plain as morning light.

ORME. Most swift conclusions : this at least is true,  
 His mantle has not fallen on one of you.

[A COUNTRYMAN pushes his way through the crowd  
 which has rapidly grown denser.]

But who the devil's this ?

COUNTRYMAN. There's murder done  
 At Angell's vineyard. Richard Angell's son  
 Brained with a vineaxe, and the old man dead  
 For sudden sorrow.

CITIZENS.                   The murderer ?  
 COUNTRYMAN.                 Unknown,  
     Nor any cause could prompt the crime ; ill will  
     Or quarrel there was none : there lies young Angell  
     His skull cleft through, the bloody axe beside him :  
     Else not a sign—

CITIZENS.                   Most strange !  
 VINEDRESSER.                 Ay, strange indeed,  
     Did we not know who was abroad last night  
     Upon the devil's errands. First by night  
     He prowls ; anon he'll brave the day : entice  
     The whistling schoolboy to the primrose wood  
     And leave him butchered ; stand beside the team  
     In some lone field and strike the ploughman down ;  
     Visit the woodman's solitary hut,  
     And stab the mother with her cradled babe.

*[Enter bearers with a bier followed by an old man.]*

IMOGEN. Ah me ! Ah me ! Death is not satisfied  
     With sending tidings merely, but is come  
     Himself into our midst.

OLD MAN.                     Set down the bier.  
     Come all of you and take your last farewell.  
     Doris is dead.

*[He lifts the face cloth.]*

With these white folded hands  
 She knit the cord that strangled her sweet breath.  
 Give me a handkerchief that I may wipe  
 The froth from her lips. There, there, she's comely  
 yet ;  
 A gentle lass to do so fell a deed.  
 But I thank God her lover lies stone dead,  
 An arrow through his heart—

ORME.

What ? Young Peruse !

He should have bled to death upon love's knees,  
Wrapped in his leopard skin. I have not come  
So near to weeping since Cock Robin died.

IMOGEN. Peruse ! Oh cruel hap ! I could have spared  
A dozen wiser heads for such a heart.

OLD MAN. I tell thee, lass, he's dead. And I pray God  
He will o'ertake with such a bloody stroke  
Denys that led them both astray. Take up  
The bier : I'll make that prayer before the rood.

[*They move slowly in at the Cathedral door, bearing the body and chanting as they go.*

Oh, to think dull earth must press  
That white bosom, veil those eyes,  
Hiding all the loveliness  
Of fresh fields and cheerful skies :  
Oh, that suns must rise and set,  
Light and shade each other chase,  
When the morning dews are wet,  
O'er the grass that hides thy face :  
And the wandering mountain-bee,  
Heard no more, draw near to thee,  
Humming all the golden noon  
To deaf ears his drowsy tune.  
Softly, softly shall the snow  
O'er thy grave her mantle throw,  
When the winter nights are long  
And 'tis dark at evensong.

## SCENE II

*The interior of the Cathedral : the bell still tolling.  
Doris' bier is stopped at the entrance. CANON,  
OLD MAN, IMOGEN, BLANCHE, FRANCES, PETRO-  
NILLA and a great crowd of people.*

A CANON. It cannot be, the Church may not receive  
The bodies of accursed self-murderers :  
It is pollution, sacrilege ; instead  
Of comfortable words such as are spoken  
Above the dead whom God has summoned home,  
Hide her in silence in the earth : no rite  
Nor other office said save what the spade  
Repeats with dismal stroke.

OLD MAN. It moves me not :  
Take up the bier and let her be interred  
Even as custom bids : were the whole volume  
Of holy writ recited at her grave  
It could not bring her back to life. O God !  
Thou know'st the man whose evil influence  
First led her from safe paths : even as the stake  
Is driven through her breast, so may my spear  
Pierce his : lengthen, I pray, my days for this ;  
Or if that be not granted, let him fall  
Into Thy hands, and spare him not, O God :  
But all that makes Thee terrible, all pains  
Wherewith Thou visitest the just and unjust,  
The spite of accident, scourge of disease,  
Whichever can inflict most grievous ill,  
Fasten its tooth upon the finest nerve  
Of his most vital essence, till his brain  
Be wracked to madness—

*The BISHOP and LORD AUXERRE have entered during the above and are followed by HERMES, PHILIP CHASTELLUX and ARIANE who wears mourning ; a crowd of attendants behind.*

BISH. Bid the bell cease ; let nave and choir be lit,  
And burning tapers in each chapel set ;  
'Tis strangely dark. Old man, your grief I know,  
And I have heard your prayer : Almighty God  
Hath answered it already : he is dead—

THE CROWD. Dead !

BISH. To the echo dead ! For last night's storm,  
The wind above, the full-fed Yonne below  
Roaring against the battlemented bridge,  
Uprooted one huge pier, whose base—a boat  
That stemmed with granite beak the running tide—  
Forsook its moorings in the river-bed,  
And the incumbent arch, a wreck of stones,  
Fell ruining in the stream. Would you have proof ?  
Go, of the broken parapet enquire,  
Or from the flood that sweeps beneath it still  
Gather your answer ; for its voice is loud.

*Music and this chant.*

Dark and stern  
The river rolls,  
Candles burn  
For dead men's souls.  
Lift not the pall,  
Light not the shrine ;  
Death ends all,  
And no stars shine  
When darkness thickens  
And daylight sickens  
Like a dying fire in a forest of pine.

BISH. Pardon, my lord Auxerre, if I have suffered  
The solemn business that hath brought us here  
To be interrupted thus : in this dark hour  
When heaven still frowns, and fear, the child of  
guilt,  
Not yet baptized with the diviner name  
Of penitence, desires but dare not ask  
Pardon—that grace which we should beg in vain  
But for the blood of Christ that purchased it—  
Though on unfeigned repentance God bestows  
Forgiveness, costliest of His gifts, and asks  
No price except a broken heart : natheless,  
Because prosperity tempts men to break  
Strong oaths wrung from them in distressful days,  
I much commend thy thought ; which is to seal  
Even with thy child's virginity the bond  
Newly contracted here 'twixt heaven and thee :  
Thus is the past atoned ; the future pledged  
To God. Shall it be so ?

Aux. Amen, my lord :

Come hither, Ariane.

I know thy heart of gold ; but it is soft  
And easy wrought and melts with its own ardour.  
It needs the alloy of sterner metal. Philip,  
There's more of iron than of gold in thee ;  
Therefore thou shalt be master in my house,  
Ruler in this my state when I am gone,  
Husband and lord of my dear daughter. Here  
I plight you two in pledge of public weal  
And private happiness : a line prolonged  
By mixture of the noble blood that flows  
In these two hands ; honour redoubled, wealth  
And great estates enlarged—

ARIANE.

## Among the dead

The living are but phantoms. Sovran death,  
I do acknowledge thee as my sole lord.  
Look, what a hand is here ! Who clasps it dies  
By slow degrees : as ice congeals the pool  
The sheeted death shall glaze his living soul,  
Till nothing that he tastes, or sees, or touches,  
Or earth or sky, bird's song or voice of child  
Can make him glad : good wine shall cheer him not  
Sadness shall hunt with him and dine with him  
And shut his lips so that he cannot pray,  
And gloom shall settle on the company  
Where'er his face is seen.

BISH.                                  You hear her, Sir.  
AUX. These are wild words : but then her grief is  
fresh.

We have provoked them ; we have been too rash—  
HERMES. You jeopardy her reason if you press  
The matter further.

BISH.                                  Let it be deferred  
And handled at a more convenient time.  
Hearken, ye men and women of Auxerre,  
My wandering sheep : tidings come hourly in  
Of corn and wine destroyed ; of vineyards stained  
With blood : young men found murdered in the  
fields ;  
And matrons big with child that hanged themselves  
With the unripe fruit of their womb. We are  
estranged  
From God ; His wrath is hot against us : yea,  
Our very gifts are unacceptable.  
But we have interceders, bright allies  
Nearer God's throne : and chiefly her whose bones  
Rest somewhere 'neath these flags ; whose holy arm  
Is still extended for us up to Heaven.

Oh, children, children, down upon your knees :  
 Tear up these flagstones, leave not one unturned,  
 Until the blessed Candida's remains  
 Are on the great high altar laid to rest  
 Within a shrine of purest crystal, framed  
 In chiselled gold.

*[The people begin tearing up the flagstones and exhuming the dead bodies. A solemn chant is heard to rise and clouds of incense roll down the Cathedral, mingling with the odours of the grave.]*

*Chant.*

Oh, Time, whose waves have cast upon thy shore  
 This mortal wreckage, rib and skull and bone,  
 Why do thy tempests trouble them once more ?  
     Let them alone !  
 Fools ! fools ! Why batter at death's mouldering gates ?  
 What secret think you lurks in the dark ground ?  
 That which the living brain in vain debates  
     Shall the dead expound ?  
 Darkness and stench ; a night without a star :  
 Of all thou hidest, death, is this the sum ?  
 Alas ! thou can't not hide the thing these are  
     And we become—

AR. A hand ! A white arm through the incense cloud !  
 It hovers like a cresset of pale fire ;  
 Like fire it dies and glows again : it waves  
 Me on—

HER. Pray God the maid be not distraught !  
 AUX. Come with me, daughter : home, come home,  
 dear child—

AR. Look how it beckons me !

BISH. I see it not !

AUX. Nor I : nay, nay, believe it not, Ariane ;  
 It is a phantom of thine own sick brain,  
 That gathers substance from thy fevered speech ;  
 Shake but thy head at it ; swear 'tis not there ;  
 And it will straight be gone.

AR. See, see, it points  
 With downward gesture vehement, as if  
 It feared I should not understand : it moves  
 From arch to arch towards us ; now it hangs  
 Suspended in mid-air above our heads ;  
 And still with agitated motion flits,  
 Restless and full of dire significance.

THE CROWD. It is the arm of blessed Candida.

PET. It is the accusing hand of Denys come  
 To plague his murderers.

FRANCES. I welcome it  
 Whether it come in kindness or in wrath.  
 For 'tis a message from the spirit-world  
 And calls our souls above these ancient bones  
 And charnel-odours.

AR. It shines above us still  
 And as 'twould strike darts angrily : a hawk  
 Stoops so and poises o'er her cowering prey.  
 It moves away : down the dark nave it floats  
 And comes to rest above yon sepulchre carved  
 With the recumbent skeleton in stone.  
 Oh, follow it !

THE CROWD. To the Saint's tomb ! On ! On !

*[They all rush towards the tomb : as they approach the form of DENYS is seen to emerge : they make as if to seize him, but the hand, now plainly visible to all, waves them threateningly away. DENYS, with a yell of unearthly laughter, disappears into the twilight.]*

PHIL. Death to the sorcerer, death !

RALPH. Forwards or back,  
However good my will, I cannot stir :  
My feet are riveted as if in irons.

PHIL. The hand ! the hand ! Brave it who will, I  
dare not.

So awful is its menace and so dread,  
It waved me threateningly away. And now  
It lingeringly fades.

RALPH. How think you, Sir,  
Was this his ghost or was it flesh and blood,  
And hath the Bishop lied ?

AR. Alas ! Alas !  
That thou art given back to life to die !  
Oh, I could find it in my heart to wish  
That thou wert dead indeed ! Death sorts his  
victims  
And the hand points who shall die first.

*Chant.*

They rose, as if in mockery of their creed,  
These sleepers ere the judgment-trumpet cried ;  
A resurrection of the body indeed,  
But not the body glorified.  
Say, can this arm, brandished in ghostly feint  
Above the doomed or guilty like a rod,  
This spectre from death's famished world, content  
The souls that weary for the living God ?

[*The scene slowly closes.*

## ACT IV

### SCENE I

*A place of tombs with a crucifix. Night.*

*Enter HERMES.*

HERMES. Oh that I could recall that rash, blind curse,

The voice of hate run mad ; but now become  
A prophecy that swift events obey,  
Closing upon their victim. On my knees  
Help me pour out my soul in prayer, O God :  
Let the strong effort rob me of my breath ;  
Break me upon the wheel of anguish ; take  
My life for his life and my soul for his.

O Will Supreme, will that this man shall live !  
Oh, I am weak ; I have no power ; no voice ;  
If Thou art dumb, he dies. Speak, Lord. To be  
Estranged, disowned, cast off ; to grasp the void,  
When we reach forth our trembling hands to Thee,  
Is bitter death ; life hath no other ill,  
And the whole world no woe save only this.  
Then mock us not with phantom menaces  
Unworthy Thee ; leave us not grovelling  
Among dead bones to find some fragment out  
That we may pin our faith to. Hush ! no sound ;  
Silence is all the answer to my prayer,  
Silence and gathering shade. Oh, let me die ;

Lift off life's insupportable burden ; take me  
To Thee ; and let my body at Christ's feet,  
A soldier at the gates he would have stormed,  
Lie stretched out lifeless.

[*He throws himself on the ground before the crucifix.*

DENYS in rags and almost naked emerges from among  
the tombs.

DENYS. Dead ! quite dead ! I knew it.

You see how these corpses follow me ; I'll lift him ;  
He mustn't lie here by himself ; up there  
Is pleasant company.

[*He attempts to lift HERMES, who rises from the ground.*

HER. Denys !

DENYS. Hush, monk ; it was not I that slew thee.  
Seven devils—well, I can't remember all—  
But murder was among them ; murder breaking  
From the law's control ; that was the phrase ; I  
hope

That there'll be no delay : they are kindly treated  
After they're dead, and that must be my plea.

HER. Murder ! O God, the guilt be on my head ;  
The doom hath fallen on him, the sin is mine.

DENYS. I love to move the noiseless mortised slabs  
Upon their granite sockets and peep in :  
Sometimes I set a little drowsy lamp  
Winking in dun air warm with choking sand ;  
Or knit a napkin round a chapfallen skull :  
And then I see how Death hath trod the press,  
His vats being full : ay, and fermenting too,  
Just as they were on the Cathedral floor.

HER. Oh, horrible !

DENYS. But how they came to die

I cannot tell ; yet the whole world declares  
That it was I that slew them ; that can't be.  
I knew a man once who was much beloved :  
He had a flask ; a kind of talisman ;  
Some say he stole it from the Gergasenes ;  
Some that the youngest imp of vasty hell  
Steering his flight beyond the land of Punt,  
Where there's a temple dedicate to Death,  
Filched it away ; and to the sultaness  
Of Prester John for certain favours sold.  
At any rate the thing was full of death ;  
And people made a feast and drank of it,  
And that's how all the trouble first began :  
For he was haunted by a small brown owl,  
This merry fellow—he was merry once—  
Perched on his shoulder, pecking at his ear :  
At last it drove him mad ; and when he climbed  
The purple hills to hear the song of bees,  
Burying his face among the honied bells,  
The owl was there, and all the heather blazed,  
And singed him like hell-fire. Why, such a man  
Draws all the guilt of all the world upon him :  
And yet I hold the devils much to blame.  
Seven devils : well, I'll take to keeping swine—

HER. Oh, God, he's mad ; unnerfed ; hate has  
unhinged him ;—

His soul must stagger on through idiot dreams,  
And of its after-voyage to the grave  
Can render no account ; unless God heal him—

DENYS. That cannot be ; for they have murdered  
Christ

And hung Him there. The nails are driven in ;  
But—that's the secret they won't have me tell—  
There's not a blue-eyed flower at His feet

That smiles the less : I think they mock at Him  
Worse than the Roman soldiers.

HER. Come with me,  
For I have much to tell thee of His Death—  
DENYS. Yes, yes, we'll talk of death. Have you a  
bone,  
A bit of bone to hang about my neck ?  
I should feel safer then ; more like the rest ;  
They all wear bones since—

HER. Thou shalt have my habit,  
Poor body stripped by madness of its dress ;  
So under cloak of darkness we will go  
To the good brothers of St. Germains.

DENYS Ho !  
I should love that : there of the bones of saints  
I'll compound incense for the sanctuary.  
HER. That thou shalt, brother. God shall visit thee ;  
And give thee tender glimpses of His love  
To prouder wits denied. Thou art a child  
And as a child shalt enter heaven.

DENYS. Hist !  
The sound of hoofs upon the flinty way.  
I know the pale horse that Death sat upon  
And Hell that followed with him.

HER. Hide thyself—  
DENYS. They ride this way.  
HER. Quick, quick, beseech thee, hide.  
DENYS. No need ; I'll make myself invisible,  
Then like a firefly I will glow again,  
And lure them through the dark ; but when day  
breaks  
I'll quench my lamp, and like a long-legged grig  
Chirp in the grass and jump upon their backs,  
Now on, now off, while they lie foundering slow

In a deep bog ; I know the trick of it ;  
 'Tis merry sport.

HER.                    God send us merrier :  
 I fear you laugh too soon.

[*He hastily hides himself and DENYS.*

PHILIP and RALPH ride in.

PHIL.                    The very echo  
 And ghost of that demoniac laugh which rang  
 Through the Cathedral, when the frantic crowd  
 Stumbled on torn-up stones and half-fleshed limbs,  
 While the red sunset branded all with flame.  
 Good angels guard us, Ralph.

RALPH.                    Amen, my lord ;  
 But all the way from Julien-du-Sault  
 I'm troubled with a sweating of the palm,  
 And once or twice I thought I heard a wolf  
 Howl upwind in a folding of the down.

[*A wolf howls.*

PHIL. Listen ! The whining challenge warms my blood  
 That, I confess, this goblin-laughter chilled.  
 Come, tie our horses to the crucifix ;  
 So while we search they shall be safe from harm.  
 Werewolf or spectre, puck or leprechaun,  
 The hunt is up ; first we will search these tombs,  
 And then the yews beyond.

[*The horses are tied. Exeunt PHILIP and RALPH searching the ground in different directions. Then re-enter RALPH leading DENYS cowled and followed by HERMES.*

RALPH. I thank the Lord I've found this holy man,  
 As good a hound to set upon the trail

As ever devil-hunter could desire.  
 I'll blow my horn and call his lordship back ;  
 Here is a brace to try a cast withal.

*[He blows his horn ; its echoes among the rocks are prolonged by DENYS in peals of unearthly laughter.]*

God save us ! I've the devil by the sleeve  
 And took him for a monk : I'd liefer walk  
 Naked through nettles than play hide-and-seek  
 With hermits in the dark.

*Re-enter PHILIP.*

PHIL. Whom hast thou here ?  
 Why dost thou blow thy horn ?

HER. This anchorite  
 Dwelling in tombs with penitence and prayer,  
 Wild roots and berries his sole sustenance,  
 Is become crazed, and fills the hollow rocks,  
 That used to echo to his holy psalms,  
 With witless laughter.

PHIL. Who art thou that speakest ?

HER. One that hath many things to repent of.

PHIL. Ay,  
 So have we all. But art thou of our country ?

HER. A stranger and a sojourner—

PHIL. The moon  
 Breaks in a fit of anger from the clouds  
 To smite the lie upon thy forehead, monk.  
 I know thee ; thou art Hermes. Ralph, make haste ;  
 Unhood that madman ; let me see his face.

*[RALPH removes DENYS' hood.]*

DENYS. Said I not so ? I know that this is death ;  
 I fled from him before : but now he's come

To take me prisoner ; and welcome kindly,  
Good my lord Death.

PHIL. Ay, death for thee indeed ;  
Wretch, are thy vile enchantments come to this  
That thou must screw thy face to an idiot's mask  
And smile upon the moon ? Thou canst not smile  
Pity into my soul. Those are the lips  
That cast infection on the unbreathed glass  
Of my love's chastity ; that uttered words  
To deepen the pale rose upon her cheek ;  
Those are the eyes that stole unlawful looks.  
Filth, had'st thou dared no more than to admire,  
As a slave may his mistress, thou had'st died.

HER. In truth, my lord, in truth his wits are fled.  
He is no more—to my sorrow be it spoken—  
Than a poor helpless madman.

PHIL. Evil beast !  
If I forbear to slay thee where thou art  
As lawfully I might, 'tis not thy madness  
Saves thee ; I spare thee now that thou may'st die  
Before a thousand witnesses, God's curse  
Blinding thy dazzled wits ; and no lean beasts  
With famished whine shall fawn upon thee then,  
But flames shall lick thee with their burning tongues ;  
Thy limbs shall drop from thee like melting lead  
Even at the ladder's foot they scaled so fast.  
Come, bind him, Ralph, and fling him on thy horse.

[*They bind DENYS, tie him to RALPH's horse and ride away.*

HER. Ah, God, I leave it unto Thee : Thou knowest  
How my whole frame is one incarnate prayer  
That Denys may have life and life indeed.  
Thine is the kingdom, Lord : Thy Will be done,

Pity is none in these hard human hearts.  
Oh, blessed dark enfold me here : sweet death,  
Wrap me in dreamless sleep ; wipe from my thoughts  
The nightmare of my days.

[*He casts himself on the ground and the scene closes.*

## SCENE II

*The market-place at night.* PETRONILLA and BLANCHE.

BLANCHE. Sad Autumn wanes apace ; and we who  
sighed

At his approach must weep to watch him go.

Weed fires burn and berries ripen red ;

The northern wind blows coldly from the downs  
And there's a bite of winter in the sky.

Heigho !

PET. That spinning top that hummed his silly tune  
Here in the market-place a while ago  
Spoke true : the chestnut leaves lie on the ground,  
And in the cloisters the old vine is dead.

BLANCHE. Oh where is Denys ? Shall we search  
these glooms ?

Perhaps he lingers here in loneliness,

Perhaps he's safe among the hills, or Yonne

Down her dark reaches rolls him to the sea.

PET. Footsteps approach. Sister, creep home with  
me ;

And warm thy sad thoughts at a cheerful fire.

*Enter ORME and BASKERVILLE.*

ORME. Sweet birds of night, whither away so late ?

BASK. Tuwhoo ! my pretties, can't you find a mate ?

ORME. What think you of Sir Baskerville the Bold ?  
 A perfect gentle knight, and nothing old ;  
 For who loves wine and women, by God's truth,  
 His is the blessing of perpetual youth.

BASK. Oho ! Oho ! I love them so,  
 To the devil with me I'd have them go.

BLANCHE. Come, Petronilla.

PET. Out, you drunken wretch !

BASK. Out, drunken wretch ! Good Lord, you've  
 much to learn.

ORME. A court of love where each shall rule in turn  
 Is just the kind of school you need to teach  
 Less rustic manners and more pleasing speech.  
 I know a way to hold a pretty court ;  
 Kisses, not mottoes, shall provide the sport.

PET. You blear-eyed satyr ; get you from my sight.

BASK. Softly, my maid, my little Shunamite.

When King David was old and his blood ran cold  
 And he lay like a corpse in bed,  
 For he gat no heat from blanket or sheet,  
 They sent for his leman instead.

What, going, sweethearts ? How if these blear eyes  
 Had chanced see clearer than the gentle spies  
 That search for their lost leveret two and two,  
 As pretty falcons as ere Cupid flew ?

What payment for the good old man who tells  
 The secret hiding-place where Denys dwells ?

PET. Gold for his purse ; and rich wine for his  
 throat

*Chainette—migraine*—a hogshead if he will—

BASK. Why, as for money I'll not take a groat ;  
 And wine won't tempt me—

BLANCHE. Pray, good Baskerville,  
 What wouldst thou ?

BASK. That which thou hast oft bestowed  
Unasked upon this Puck of thine—

PET. Thou toad,  
Thou dragger of thy belly in the dirt,  
Whose knees are crooked elbows ; would'st thou  
squirt

Thy venom on this spotless flower of grace ?  
Out, roundbacked reptile ; out, thou baggy face :  
Thou creeping newt ; thou pike whose tettered skin  
Is scaled with every evil itch of sin ;  
Nibble not here, thou fish ; I'd rather see  
A leper hang upon her lips than thee.

ORME. Ay, hang's the word ; heels up, heads down,  
no matter ;

'Tis no use waiting till a thief gets fatter.  
Your hardened sinner ere his heart grows harder  
Grows wondrous tender in a great man's larder.  
Why, down at Chastellux I've seen a score  
Like kites and weasels nailed to a barndoar.  
My lord is his own warrener and snares  
This kind of lousy rogue as boys do hares,  
Mostly 'twixt dark and dawn : and yet he'll find  
He can't keep secrets from the tell-tale wind,  
That will be babbling to the pies and crows,  
And hath scant reverence for a lady's nose.  
'Buzz,' quoth the fly nor fear nor shame prohibit ;  
'God bless this curl-pate gipsy on his gibbet.'  
All Thy works praise Thee : even flies say grace  
Before they picnic on a dead man's face.

PET. Blasphemous liar ! Oh that these stones would  
gape  
And earth might gulp thee down.

ORME. A pretty scrape  
You'd have me in like Dathan and Abiram !

And all because, howe'er I may desire 'em,  
Kisses withheld and pailfuls of abuse—

PET. A toothsome wash to pour about thine ears,  
Thou hog—

ORME. Can't make me niggard of my news.

PET. The devil drive thee to his sty—

ORME. My dears,  
Denys is— (*he makes a sign at his throat*).

PET. Lies ! more lies !

ORME. Or if not quite,  
Such respite as may serve to bleed him white  
Is all that he or you can hope for ; damme,  
A dying lecher's kisses are but clammy ;  
But none disputes 'em : they are all your own :  
Make haste : there's time to halve his latest groan.

PET. Nay, nay, sweet Blanche : believe it not : I  
know

God will not suffer him to perish so :  
He's safe from all the hellish, hunting crew,  
In some dark grove of ilex or of yew ;  
Bright thoughts are his, swift as the upland breeze  
That settles for a moment where it please  
And then is gone again on happy wings.  
Birds are his friends, and gentle, large-eyed things,  
Fawns with their dams, and stags at evening stand  
And with their rough tongues lick his brinish hand.  
He's brother to the wolf and to the bear ;  
The watchful lynx stands sentry o'er his lair ;  
And vernal woods must first forget to bud  
Ere they betray their nursling's solitude.

ORME. Oh, that's a trick that's soon forgot ;  
The dead leaves fall, the fallen rot ;  
And soon the autumn woods will be  
As bare as is the gallows-tree.

Hark, what a knocking at the gate !  
Who's this comes riding in so late ?  
He's one of those that seek their prey  
'Twixt set of sun and dawn of day.

[Enter RALPH ; he dismounts and leads his horse to a fountain.

BASK. Huntsman, what cheer ?

RALPH. There, drink thy fill, poor beast !  
A two-mile burst with Satan holster-wise  
Tied to the pummel. Heard you ere the like ?  
But for the wolves I'd have unstrapped him here,  
And led him like a tame bear through the town.

ORME. What ? Satan, huntsman ?

RALPH. Call him what you will :  
The devil's in him : tie him up with thongs :  
He'll whistle on the wolves to set him free.

PET. He speaks of Denys—Denys—he is found.

RALPH. Ay, in a place of tombs, my girl. At first  
He played the madman. Mad ? He'd wits enough  
To call the wolf-pack after him. At last  
Seeing that they would either have my life  
Or his, I cut the straps and let him go.  
But mark what followed. Straight the wolf-pack  
stopped,  
And I drew rein : for wonder cast out fear ;  
And turning on my saddle I beheld  
A grey, lean-bellied bitch that licked his face  
And swollen, clammy hands : with loving tooth  
Gnawing his leathern bonds ; then, instantly,  
In likeness of a wolf-cub at her chin  
He leapt, and puppy-like ran by her side.  
Wild were the yellings of the demon pack,

And the witch moon looked down upon the world.  
But I rode on and straightway told my lord.

ORME. What said lord Philip ?

RALPH. First he raged and swore ;  
Doubted my word and came about to slay me ;  
But when I offered to return with him,  
He shook his bridle rein, and spurred his horse :  
' If the wolf-fiends steal not his soul to-night  
Or make a meal upon his flesh,' quoth he,  
' I'll try a cast of bloodhounds in these woods  
And he shall hang to-morrow by the neck.'  
So if he lives he dies, and if he's dead  
The better for us all. Come, Traveller ;  
I'm for the Shoes.

*[Exit, leading his horse.]*

PET. Sweet sister, weep not. I have still some hope  
To cheat the wolf's maw and the tyrant's rope.  
Men at the fount of grief their tears renew ;  
May not immortal hearts have pity too ?  
O dark and star-sown veil ! O deeps of air  
Strewn with dead wings of unavailing prayer,  
And Thou that dwell'st beyond ! the occasion take  
And show Thy power for Thine honour's sake.  
Shut the wolves' mouths and through the darkness  
guide

My feet to Denys on the mountain-side,  
And give him love and life and liberty :  
But if no human cry may reach to Thee,  
And there's no heart that beats beyond the stars,  
But dumb, blind force waging insensate wars,  
Vast, purposeless, like arms of some huge mill  
That must obey the winds' imperious will,  
Whose millstones are the pitiless fates that grind  
The blood and brains and hearts of humankind,

Till in the agony shriek follows shriek  
 And that which seems a soul begins to speak,  
 Where death's blind darts rain thickest let me be  
 And run to meet the bolt not launched at me.

[*Exeunt PETRONILLA and BLANCHE.*]

ORME. Oh ! what a sad example when she prays :  
 Oaths are petitions fallen on evil days ;  
 First, meek and mannerly : a few reverses  
 Curdle the milk of prayer into curses.  
 Laugh, devil, laugh ; at Charity's debate  
 Outcrops the ugly scum of human hate,  
 And when by malice led my lies I strew  
 God takes especial pains that they come true.

[*Exeunt.*]

### SCENE III

*The hills : dawn.* BLANCHE, FRANCES, IMOGEN,  
 PETRONILLA.

*One sings drowsily.*

Feed us with dreams, O god discrowned,  
 Where winter's frozen shadows creep ;  
 No garlands round our temples bound,  
 Our heavy limbs benumbed with sleep.  
 Still are the feet so fast that flew,  
 Our garments stiff with hoary dew ;  
 Feed us with dreams.

[*They sleep.*]

*Enter HERMES and DENYS.*

HER. Poor children ! Like a bed of flowers they lie  
 Bowed by the heavy thunderdrops to earth,  
 Their sweet stems snapped, their petals stained with  
 clay.

Tread softly ; wake them not ; let them sleep on :  
 They must not open those grief-darkened eyes  
 To blacker woe. Come, Denys.

PET. (*starting from sleep*). Wake, oh, wake !  
 Ah, God, I dreamed that our lost love passed by—

[*They all start up. DENYS turns and looks at them : they shrink back in horror.*

HER. Ay, this is he, this also God permits,  
 And draws him to Himself down darkened ways  
 That the great light may shine upon him : takes  
 His reason captive to redeem his soul.

BLANCHE. Ah, God ! (*She hides her face in her hands.*)  
 FRANCES. I never looked on wretchedness

Till I beheld that face. Oh, misery,  
 Would he, would all of us, were dead and cold !

PET. Pitiful heaven ! look not so strangely on us :  
 Speak to us, Denys—

DENYS. What ! are these maskers here  
 Without their rags ? That's more genteel, and fits  
 Their lineage well, for they are all Death's daughters,  
 Unvizored now and featured like their sire.

Oh, laughable the clumsy tramp of limbs  
 Rounded with flesh : so boors keep holiday  
 Heaving gut-loaded gambols at a fair.  
 And then the sweat that must be wiped away ;  
 The retchy lip-work ; oh, the grossness of it ;  
 Lips are but kitchen-wENCHES, greasy too,  
 That serve the belly with its meat and drink.  
 But, look you, I'm for the charnel house.

HER. Even so  
 His mind runs on mortality and death :  
 But where the brethren of my order dwell  
 Divinest pity shall restore his wits.

PET. No, no : the woods and hills shall be his refuge  
And we his tender nurses : your cold cloister,  
Where the sad echo of sepulchral stones  
Cries out to footfalls of the living dead,  
Will kill him quite : lay him upon the turf,  
And the wise, silent hours with holy balm  
Shall stoop from heaven to heal him.

IMOGEN. Sister, peace.

The sun and rain can never kiss him back  
To gentle reason and calm thoughts—

DENYS. Away !

The revellers are met : the dance begins :  
Be frolicsome, each dainty Adam's rib,  
Gleesome and nimble as dead autumn leaves.  
Clatter me here, hip, shank and hollow thigh,  
And chin to chin scrape many a bony kiss,  
While thin winds snatching at the sky-hung bells  
Toll you through wet woods till the sun drops down.

[*He moves slowly away with HERMES.*

## ACT V

### SCENE I

*Auxerre Castle.* AUXERRE, ARIANE, HERMES.

AUX. How long am I to wait for thine assurance ?  
Tell me this ghost of unregenerate earth  
Haunts thee no more.

AR. I cannot to ease thy soul  
Burden mine own with falsehood.

AUX. Then he lives,  
And thou art still his lover, comfortest him  
With secret hope.

AR. I swear this is untrue.  
Denys is set apart for sacrifice,  
Not for the love of mortal woman. Dead  
Or living he must hold upon his way  
Alone, no woman clinging to his feet.  
Now all things dwindle in the vast of death  
That dwarfs death's self, and death and life and love  
Shrink to the compass of this brief black day.

AUX. This bitter-hearted fruit has quite destroyed  
All taste and natural appetite for life :  
Is there no cure for such a malady ?

HER. My lord, I know but one man in the world  
Who under God might pour in oil and wine  
And heal these wounds.

AUX. Let him be sent for, then.

HER. He may not quit our convent ; by strict vows  
Confined within its walls : but if it please you  
To send your daughter thither, counsel sweet  
And solemn consolation she shall hear.

AUX. Go, Ariane ; submit yourself to him ;  
God hath destroyed and blasted with a curse  
The city of your sojourn ; look not back  
On peril of your soul : there, kiss me, child.  
How like a shrunken river runs our blood  
Narrowed and dwindled to the compass small  
Of thy young veins. Then let it not be lost  
In rocky passages and barren sands,  
But nourish in its course full-flowing streams.  
Doth not the Bishop bless the bridge to-morrow ?

HER. My lord, it was determined so.

AUX. Why then  
In token of old sins now done away  
I'll see these new foundations wisely laid.

[*Exeunt.*

## SCENE II

*A large bare room in the monastery of St. Germain ;  
an organ to which DENYS is giving the finishing  
touches stands on one side. HERMES.*

HER. I think this fear hath fallen from thee, friend ;  
The darkness lifts : we have had woeful cause  
To grieve and pray for thee : thanks be to God  
That He hath heard our intercessions—

DENYS. Hermes,

Madness is not so terrible as to stand  
Upon the dreadful brink : to grasp the weapons

That should have armed the mind against itself,  
And feel them break even in the downward stroke,  
Turning to serpents.

HER. Let these dark thoughts sleep :  
Thou need'st not fear rebellion any more,  
Nor those insurgent fancies streaming in  
That stunned thy reason ; God hath made thee whole.

DENYS. Yet I shall never wear my mind again  
A seamless garment : Hermes, I am changed.

HER. As after sickness changed, but not transformed.

DENYS. Changed or transformed I know not : I have  
trod

The vacant streets and silent, stony squares  
Which are the grey metropolis of death ;  
The chilly dust of sunless labyrinths,  
Stirred as with naked feet ; yea, knocked in vain  
Upon the massy barriers of death :  
There's nothing graven on them ; even now  
Embalmed memory crumbles back to dust,  
And only dust remains.

HER. The air which builds  
The blood and tissues makes a dust of death  
And shows it a mere ruin. This is well ;  
I count it as a sign of health.

DENYS. I am  
Like an adventurer, who hath wandered long  
And lost his memory among unknown shores ;  
And when men ask of him to make report  
What manner of country and what folk were there,  
Can only say that it was desolate,  
A wreck of heaven, a wreck of earth ; rent clouds,  
Torn by fierce winds that seemed to shake the stars,  
Blown wastes and dunes and solitary meres.  
It is the madman's lot that he brings back,

Nor news, nor riches, nor fresh knowledge. I  
Have been where I know not ; and yet methinks  
Could I have wandered there and kept my wits  
I could have told strange tales.

HER. So stars are banished to the ends of space  
And so return, revisiting the world,  
And bring no tidings with them.

DENYS. I should have sunk,  
Gone on for ever sinking through the void,  
While the eternal surges dinned mine ears,  
But that an air which had its birth in heaven,  
As musical as brooks in Eden's bowers,  
Flowed through my dreams and comforted my feet  
When they were far astray, leading me back  
With gentle modulations clear and strong.

HER. Yonder is the ark,  
Stored with all sweets that can delight the soul,  
To which thy spirit like the homing dove  
Returns in peace ; a mighty instrument,  
With stops and keys and passages for thunder.  
This is thy handiwork ; 'tis thou did'st teach  
These pipes to warble with their reedy tongues,  
And hum and throb and wail to thy moved soul.  
And yet how meagre was thy first attempt,  
And even that reckoned a turning point  
In thy disease. Most painfully at first  
Groping among the dead thy days were passed ;  
And ever where the funeral-bell was rung  
Or grave new-digged within these cloistered grounds  
Thy footsteps bent that way. Heaven pitied thee  
And, though thy speech was frozen and thy face  
Set in a marble sorrow, by degrees  
Thou did'st at length make friends with happier  
thoughts ;

Pleased with the moonlight on the frozen snow,  
And pleased to wander by the river bed,  
The marshy creeks and silent wintry pools,  
And rills that lose themselves in fenny meads  
Among the rushes where the wild swans nest.  
The reeds that thou did'st shape, set to thy lips  
Cried like the bird which, wheeling nearest Heaven,  
Screams sharpest pain, a still repeated woe,  
Monotonous and desolate, without hope.  
Then thou would'st fling the instrument away,  
Call it a piece of poisonous honeycomb  
Filled full of bees that stabbed thee with their  
stings.

Alas, poor soul, the sting was in thy heart :  
'Twas there the poison lurked ; and the weak straws  
Gave anguish its keen tones.

And now there's nothing that can touch the soul,  
Nor deep, nor height, but finds a language here :  
The shout of metal trumpets pealing loud  
Like angels when the Omnipotent they acclaim,  
Oboe and clarion, flute and bassoon ;  
And that still voice to which no answer comes  
The wail of sorrow, trembling on till death.

DENYS. No, there's no answer. What can the unborn  
know

Of life, to them a mystery unpierced ?  
So is the grave to us that draw this breath.  
If I could strike a chord that should express  
The groaning and the travailing of the world  
And hold it on until the end of time,  
There still would be no answer. As the tide,  
Ebbing and flowing in uneasy quest,  
Gains what it loses, loses what it gains,  
So are the searchings of the heart of man.

The old, glad gods are silent and the New  
Is mortal anguish deified in death.  
No, no ; no answer ; there's no Dweller there  
In the eternal dark ; no gospel then  
Shall wake to triumph or endure defeat,  
When the night comes on which no morning breaks.  
Faith is the rusty armour heroes wore  
Which after death serves but to deck their graves.  
We are as young leaves on an ancient tree,  
And new and old are fed by one dark earth  
And thither must return. Oh, happy woods,  
Submissive to the variable sky,  
Sunshine and glittering raindrop and dark storm,  
Let me abide with you the appointed hour,  
Give me your sweet content, yea, with that touch  
That bids you mingle undismayed with earth.  
'Tis but an accident of heat or cold  
That spring revives you here ; but there are climes  
Where the sun's bounty waxes not nor wanes  
But feeds all seasons with an equal power :  
There is no expectation of the spring  
Nor fear of death nor hope beyond the grave.  
You would not have a coward in your midst,  
A traitor too. I cannot say your prayers  
Nor chain me with your vows : your clanging bells  
Madden my soul, and your intoned griefs  
Are like the gnashings of the damned in Hell.  
Shall hares and linnets have the heart to range  
Where hawks and eagles prey, and I lie hid  
For fear of death entombed in a living grave ?  
The path men trod with me was bright with flowers,  
With vineyards clustered ; rhythmic with the beat  
Of dancers, and the pleasant country flowed  
With milk and honey ; not the tasteless sort

Thy Canaan proffers : men could crush the grapes  
 Against their palates and the milk was sweet,  
 Not soured with meditation ; they reached forth  
 Bold hands to take the honey, tremulous  
 With no sick sense of guilt that makes each taking  
 Seem like a theft. Hermes, thou hast given me love,  
 Prayed for me, wept for me ; yea, sweated blood  
 In anguished intercession ; yet we stand  
 As far apart as truth from error ; God  
 Knows where the truth and where the error lies.  
 Time and eternity : I will not be  
 The fool to lose them both ! Back to the woods,  
 The fields and fells, the brooks and running streams !  
 Mists hide me ! Rivers hush me ! Winds and clouds  
 My pilots be ! Spirits of earth and fire,  
 Echoes and leafy whispers, silences  
 That dwell in caves, or haunt majestic slopes  
 Bare to the sky, be of my fellowship,  
 Give me for bride the shade that veils her face  
 In forests unprofaned.

*[He turns as if to go out, not perceiving ARIANE, who is ushered in by a brother of the convent.]*

AR. I pray you, father,  
 Where is the man whose counsel I'm to hear ?  
 HER. Dear lady ! I have given you to drink  
 The bitterest cup of all.

*[He hides his face and bows his head.]*

AR. (*perceiving DENYS*). Denys ! Dear God !  
 I thank Thee, oh, how fervently for this !  
 Beloved ! Oh, had they prevailed ; made me  
 So far unfaithful as to think thee dead !  
 Away ! The thought of it is as a gulf,

A whirling gulf that draws me to its depths  
To drown me in despair !

DENYS. I would to God—

O Death that cam'st so near, yet missed thy mark—

AR. Love, when Death strikes he cannot aim so false  
But he shall hit us both.

DENYS. A vow's a vow,

And there are some that only death may cancel—

AR. If—but thou hast not— Oh, I fear the truth  
Not the false hint that hides it—dar'st thou, Denys,  
Look me in the eyes and say thou art a monk  
Vowed from the world, from life and love ?

DENYS. Yea, vowed

To death.

AR. Ah, gentle heart, my hunted one ;  
Thou shalt belong to Dian's herd, and none  
Shall dare to do thee harm.

DENYS. I am alone

In midst of nothingness : to be alone  
Is dreadful ; but to be alone and find  
The vastness empty, without God or love !  
Oh heart, heart, heart, where are the rubies gone,  
The flawless gems glistening in golden sands ?  
Is nothing left but this thrice-sifted dirt,  
The dross and dregs of life ?

AR. All-healing love,  
Quick, with thy balm anoint his failing eyes,  
Ere all grow dim and lustreless.

DENYS. No God ;  
No love. I thought that love was fair ;  
But where's the amaranth to bind her brows  
And keep her from mortality and change ?  
All the enchantresses to which men kneel  
Enslave their souls. What is it makes us proud ?

A golden eagle floating in the sun—  
 But climb the cliff, and in the eagle's nest  
 Where he sat brooding 'mid the thunder-bolts,  
 There's nothing but foul bones.

AR. O short-lived love, be changed to something fair  
 If thou must die ; and do not leave behind  
 The cold and pulseless corpse of passion dead,  
 When the touch thrills not, nor the voice endears,  
 And there's no vision for the unkindled eye !  
 It is enough ; I see thee in the flesh ;  
 I know that mine own love is changeless. Were  
 Thy body sick would I not make thee well ?  
 If thou wert dead and all my world grew dark,  
 Above doom-boding clouds my star of love  
 Would create light anew ; tarnish the moon  
 And make her frozen ashes pale and ghast  
 As the wan beams of fading memory.  
 Then where's the balm shall heal thy wounded soul  
 But the unsullied stream that brims with love ?  
 See, if I draw this breath, if blood flows here,  
 These are but witnesses of living love,  
 From my heart's beat your own shall catch love's  
 tune,  
 My lips give yours the breath that is love's soul.

DENYS. No : let me toss no more on that wild sea,  
 The still unsated, savage element  
 Of salt desire. I hunger, but for bread  
 Divine : I will not mate with aught that wears  
 The badge of sex : this brand that through the flesh  
 Bites deep and sears the soul of all her slaves.  
 There is a fountain welling in the sand ;  
 There is a shade that overhangs the pool,  
 And there are clouds and silence—

[DENYS goes out, leaving ARIANE weeping.

HER.

Let them flow.

This is thine hour of weeping : but for him  
 What tears ? The grayest daughter of despair,  
 His bride that he hath chosen instead of thee,  
 Freezes their fount and will not let them fall.  
 And as the slave, deep in the embowelled mine,  
 Hews into thicker darkness stroke by stroke,  
 So his lost soul.

AR.

O God, if he should run  
 Into some dreadful danger ! Follow him !  
 This is no time to sit and wring the hands  
 And beat the breast. Away !

[*Exeunt.*

## SCENE III

*The Underworld. Wind and Darkness. DENYS dreams.*

DENYS. Down, down ; still down through never-ending night,  
 Accumulated darkness, shade on shade,  
 And winds that blow from uncreated time  
 The barren blasts of death ! Have mercy, God !  
 If there be mercy in these elements,  
 Or any God where only ruin dwells,  
 And faiths are dust whirled in the track of years  
 Whose atoms choke my nostrils. All the woe  
 Of all the ages seizes on my brain  
 And will not let me die.

*The form of NEPHTHYS looms up in the darkness.*

NEPHTHYS. Lo ! I am she that swalloweth them all,  
 The comely gods and faiths whereon were stayed

Man's timid childhood, his adventurous prime.  
 Where Bel and Nebo stooped, the Name of Names,  
 Jehovah, awfullest of shapes, bows down,  
 Creeping phantasmal into my cold womb,  
 With Isis, Horus, Astaroth and Jove.  
 The wind, the desert and the dark remain,  
 And these are mine : my kingdom nothingness,  
 And I the barren Venus of the dead.  
 For all the spawn of mind—the gods and creeds—  
 Perishes, whelmed in my most bitter sea.  
 But since mind made them, mind may still restore  
 The shapes of its created deities,  
 And in the light of madness dream old dreams.

**BUDDHA appears.**

BUDDHA. Would'st follow me ? Know, my reward is death.

For not to be were best : touch not, taste not,  
 Hear not, see not : in the vile mart of sense  
 Have thou no commerce ; there is none good, not  
 one :  
 Worm, beast or man ; whatever flesh approves,  
 Refrain : the years, the seeming endless years  
 Shall pass ; the myriad pulses shall be still,  
 And thou be thou no more : the scattered dust  
 Is blown along the windy ways, and sinks  
 To rest at last.

[*The phantom sinks and another arises.*

MAHOMET. There is one God alone,  
 All-merciful, almighty and all-wise.  
 I, Mahomet, am his prophet : I, who felt  
 God's hand upon my shoulder chill my heart,  
 And turned the rein of Borak back to earth.

Awake, awake, Islam ! Why art thou strong ?  
 Why are thy horses swift, thy swordblades keen ?  
 Give me a bunch of dates, a bowl of milk,  
 A thousand scimitars : I will o'erleap  
 The gates of Paradise, and, looking down  
 Upon the blackened cities thick with dead,  
 Die, if immortal souls can die, of bliss,  
 Upon a Houri's bosom ! God is great !

*[He vanishes and a third apparition appears.]*

ADAM. I am the dust wherein the Lord God breathed  
 The breath of life ; for whom the garden rose  
 Of Eden, watered by the fourfold stream ;  
 And of my rib the comely Eve was made.  
 I heard the voice of God in kindness once  
 And once in awe ; for disobedience  
 We were thrust forth, lest we should eat the fruit  
 That hangs upon the tree of life and live  
 For ever. Dust thou art and unto dust  
 Shalt thou return. The mouth of God hath spoken.

*[He fades and a fourth apparition rises.]*

JOB. The curse of God pronounced on Adam's seed  
 Fell on my soul ; the thistles and the thorns ;  
 The sweat, the sorrow, the unheeded tears ;  
 Until I loathed my life and digged for death  
 As men for hidden treasure. My complaint  
 God heard, and from the whirlwind made reply,  
 Reciting all the wonders of His Hand ;  
 The ordinances of heaven, night and day,  
 The constellations and the fruitful clouds,  
 Earth and the secret fountains of the sea :  
 Yea, and the wonder of the mind of man,  
 Wisdom and knowledge that in darkness end.  
 Lightning and thunder, rain and ice and snow,

Behemoth and leviathan, all beasts  
 That range the mountain, bird and fish and worm,  
 Contended in rebuke. I bowed my head ;  
 But none of these, nor God Himself rolled back  
 The gates of death ; and I am as the wind,  
 The wasted clouds, the groaning of my breath,  
 Long stilled ; my tears long mingled with the sand.

[*He disappears.*

DENYS. Oh that my spark were quenched ; that I  
 lay still,

My breath departed from me ; and my brain  
 Filled with the dust and darkness of the grave.  
 Then should my heart have rest, nor any shock  
 Of fear or hope, nor throb of joy have power  
 To shake me more. The small and great are there ;  
 The sinner and the just, the bond and free :  
 A place of quiet ; desolate ; a sleep  
 In the eternal dark.

[*There is total darkness and silence and then a Voice.*

THE WORD. I am the Resurrection and the Life ; he  
 that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet  
 shall he live ; and whosoever liveth and believeth  
 in Me shall never die.

DENYS. Lord, let me come to Thee : more near—more  
 near—

Oh, lift me from this never-ending doom ;  
 The gulf is deep, and God, that dwells in all,  
 His presence to this eddying death denies :  
 Saviour !

[*The winds cease and all is calm and motionless.*

A long pale line of sickly light  
 Lowers in the east beyond the stony hills ;  
 And there the legions of the risen dead

That died since Adam trespassed, motionless,  
Wrapped in their cerements, kneel beneath dark  
clouds.

There is a hill—a green hill far away—  
Oh Blood of Christ ! whatever streams run dry,  
Thou through the endless ages flowest still.  
Oh Son of God ! Oh Sacrifice Divine !  
Oh Sacred Heart broken with grief for me !

*[He falls on his face ; the last scene of the crucifixion is enacted, and as the last cry from the Cross rings through the silence all is swallowed up in darkness.]*

NEPHITHYS. Thou too, mysterious Sufferer, descendest  
In the deep shades of dubious night involved.  
Faiths perish, but my kingdom shall endure ;  
Like an encroaching tide my darkness grows,  
Fed with meek earth and tributary heaven.  
Oh, miserable babyhood of man,  
Rocked on Fate's bony knees 'twixt joy and fear  
And fed with hunger ; how long will ye love  
To be deceived, and gamble with the hope  
Of immortality ? As if the voice  
Of trembling terror, crying ' Death is dead,'  
Could rend truth's veil of darkness and let in  
The cheerful, lying day. All your vain brood  
Sinks in the waves of my unfathomed sea.

*[At last daylight returns and discloses the country of Auxerre : the city in the distance ; the broad river close at hand. Upon its bank DENYS lies, and, a little way off, stand HERMES and ARIANE.]*

DENYS (*starting to his feet*).

Death, art thou vanquished here, or vanquisher ?  
Remotest ages by that cry appalled,  
Shall weep and wonder. Oh, it darkens death !

Yet of that thought I perish : life, more life !  
 And where is life save in the faith of Christ ?  
 Redeemer ! Whose despair is our sole hope !  
 Reach down Thine arms and lift me to Thy cross !  
 Nail there my feet so that they shall not stray !  
 There is no death save sin ; no life but love ;  
 And love is pain and sacrifice. Run, run !  
 This monstrous earth rises in endless peaks,  
 And all the mountain-ranges of the world  
 Rear their huge crests and roaring topple down,  
 A stony welter of enormous waves ;  
 But though they heap themselves upon my head  
 And grind me into dust, the dust shall cry  
 To its Creator, and the souls in prison,  
 Their mortal fetters dark with ageless rust  
 Struck from their limbs, come forth—Love shall do  
 this :

These moving worlds that from their roots upturn  
 Satan hath launched against my naked soul  
 Love shall surmount—through Faith. Oh ! Lead  
 me on ! [Exit.]

HER. Possessed, convulsed, tormented, blind, dis-  
 traught,  
 Insane with madness more divine than sense,  
 He rushes towards the city : crackling flames  
 Seem from the fissured earth to lick his feet,  
 And bladed lightning flashes round his head.  
 Daughter, we must not leave him.

AR. I am faint ;  
 The hope I had hath suffered dissolution,  
 My joy gives up the ghost. He goes to death  
 And whither shall I go ?

HER. Poor child ! Poor child !

[Exeunt.]

## SCENE IV

*The same, but nearer to the city. A leper sits crouched in his white robes, snaring birds.*

LEPER. The breast of a linnet, the tongue of a lark,  
The throat of a nightingale,  
The gill of a toadstool fleshed in the dark,  
And the tender steak of a snail;

Oh, these make a dish that is dainty sweet  
For the tooth of a royal king :  
Ho ! ho ! little lark, thou art leper's meat  
That at Heaven's gate didst sing !

[*He lets the cord go and rises to gather the birds.*

One ! two ! three ! Set the trap again.  
Water ; wood ; fire. Come ; come. I'll go gather nettles.

I have no ground to dig or sow,  
For Adam's curse I care not ;  
The leaf above, the root below,  
Are mine to take and spare not.

Man's proper diet, reckoned good  
Ere Death became a glutton,  
And Noah afloat upon the flood  
Perforce ate beef and mutton.

[*He moves slowly away searching for herbs.*

*Enter DENYS.*

DENYS. Lord, make the altar ready : I am here :  
Strike ; let them hew me branch by branch from life,

Or, if it please Thee, bid the roaring flames  
 Roast this loathed flesh, once, as Thy temple,  
     fair,  
 But now corrupt. Accept the offering  
 And make it worthy Thee : else vile indeed !  
 Through clash of axes ; through the bright, quick  
     tongues  
 Of gasping fire my freed soul ascends !  
 Oh, how I pant to feel the ecstasy,  
 The utter bliss of anguish unassuaged !  
 Thy bosom, Lord ! Thou wilt not turn me back  
 Though long with carnal appetites defiled !  
 Let me not suffer that supremest pang—  
 Shuddering, to hear the sentence unrevoked,  
 The horror of Thy final, blasting curse :  
 ‘Depart from me, ye wicked, I never knew ye.’

[He pauses exhausted.]

LEPER (*advancing*).

Here’s one that looks as sound’s a bell,  
     Yet roars for axe and faggot ;  
 The brain that’s hot with fear of hell  
     Will hatch this kind of maggot.

DENYS.

O thou pale knight

Of death, whose shroud like the crusader’s cloak  
 Is suffering’s emblem ; thou whose sunken eyes  
 Peer through thy latticed vizor on this earth,  
 Whose sod thou sweepest with thy grave-clothes’  
     hem ;  
 Out of what cave where death left thee half-gnawn  
 Art thou arisen to stalk the wintry fields,  
 The sheeted corpse of pestilence, a ghost,  
 A spirit and a spectre ? With thy hand  
 Thou ringest the faint knell of coming death,  
 Sorrow begot thee and thy name is woe.

LEPER. God save thee, master, and give thee a merry Christmas.

DENYS. How dreadful are the accents of disease  
Through the corrupted pipes of throat and nose,  
With horrid mockery of harmonious speech,  
Whistling untunably. Now, had I faith  
To put it to the touch ; kiss the scarred flesh  
Behind that tainted robe, and pour the balm  
Of brotherhood and pity in his ear ;  
Tell him of happiness eternal : love  
Divine, that maketh largest recompense.  
Take thou my garment, friend : give me thy cloak,  
For in God's sight I am fouler far than thou.  
Look how I cast my slough and fling away  
Earth's raiment for a vesture wove in Heaven,  
The white and vestal garment of the grave.

[*They exchange clothes.*

LEPER. What, Loony, wilt thou take my clapper too ?  
That makes thee one of us. Come, sit thee down ;  
I'll teach thee to snare larks. Soft ; thou must hide  
Behind this bush, and when the birds come—  
hop !—

' Buzz ' goes the string, and—tweedle-deedle-dee.  
I hope that won't o'ertax thy pretty wits ;  
Forsooth, it is a gentle occupation  
And most melodious food. 'Twill make thee sing  
As sweet as any angel up in Heaven.

DENYS. Hush, friend ! God grant that we may join  
our songs  
Before the Throne, and of His mercy save  
My feet and thine, and those I once ensnared,  
From gins far worse than these. I am not mad ;  
Dost thou not know me, friend ?

LEPER.

I know thee well :

Thou'rt Denys : him that all the maids were mad  
To kiss—

DENYS. Forbear ! Oh, madness most accursed !  
And I the sinful cause.

LEPER.

Content you, sir,  
That garment is love-proof. Thou'l't stay with me ?

DENYS. I may not stay. Dost thou not know the  
graves

Are open wide ? Dost thou not know the Judge  
Appeareth in the heavens ? Oh, tarry, Lord !  
Grant but one short hour to my weariness,  
Let them not die in sin ! The Bridegroom comes !  
I will not go unto the marriage feast  
Without a wedding garment. Wrap me close,  
Simon of Bethany ! With these grave-clothes,  
Surely the very dead will hear me ! On !

[*Exit.*

LEPER. I thank Thee, Lord, that makest the sun to  
shine

Upon the just and unjust. Chastellux,  
Here's proof less fallible than Joseph's coat,  
And worth a little gold. I'll to the castle  
And vend my news.

[*Exit, singing.*

Throw the dust upon my feet,  
Wrap me in my winding sheet,  
Dig for me a lonely grave,  
Such as damned self-murderers have.  
Send me forth with sound of bell  
In the fenny fields to dwell.  
There, when forest ways are dark  
And the village watchdogs bark,

With my dim horn lantern lit  
Like a death's-head moth I'll flit,  
And my wooden clapper's tongue  
Rattle like a gibbet hung  
With a felon's bones in chains ;  
Till the woodman in the lanes  
Plodding o'er the frozen ground  
Shall stumble at the fearful sound.

Very silent, very slow,  
In my long white robe I go,  
Up and down, and to and fro  
With my mask of linen, where,  
Like two caged hyænas, glare  
Famished eyes in twilight dun ;  
How the little children run !

I am merry when they scream.  
Sometimes in a noonday dream,  
Crouched upon some shady rock,  
Croaking ravens round me flock,  
Paying me the compliment  
Of their too sagacious scent.

But they dare not flesh their beaks ;  
Loud my merry clapper speaks,  
Then 'tis sport to see them fly.  
At the rich man's gate I lie ;  
He may turn me from his doors,  
Curs and mongrels lick my sores.

But a sweeter pleasure than  
Hounds' caress or human ban,  
Raven's croak or clapper's tongue,  
Psalm for living corpses sung,  
Children's shriek or lovers' fright,  
Startled on a moonless night,  
Tolling bell or hut of reed,

Whose chill damp the fen-fires feed,  
 Is to dream I lie asleep  
 In my warm grave wide and deep,  
 And Goodman Death with his mattock-men  
 Comes and digs me up again.

## SCENE V

*Thorny brakes along the lower reaches of the river ; the towers and spires of the city are nearer than before ; the broken bridge can be faintly discerned. It is late afternoon. DENYS alone.*

DENYS. Ye whispering fiends of doubt torment me not !  
 On ! On ! Ye legioned armies of the air,  
 I mock your taunts, your battle I defy,  
 Though on each blast a hostile demon rides  
 And shakes a javelin at my quaking heart.  
 Was Lazarus raised ? Answer me that, false fiends.  
 Ah, God ! these thorns !

[He rushes on, tearing his way through the bushes.]

## SCENE VI

*An open place near the broken bridge. Workmen are bringing in their tools to break down the old foundations and prepare for the ceremony of laying the new. Citizens begin to assemble.*

Enter ORME and BASKERVILLE.

BASK. (*to the workmen as they break ground*). Remember the flask, I pray you. Feelingly ; feelingly.

1st WORKMAN. The devil take the flask ; give me a pot of gold.

2nd WORKMAN. Ah, but the good red wine ! Why, I do feel

As 'twere a bitterness in me for want  
Of a kind cup to sweeten angry blood.

3rd WORKMAN. Ye are two fools to talk of gold and wine.

We that were prodigal in plenty, lack  
In these lean times the scraps we threw to dogs  
When we were fat and prosperous. Savagely,  
Savagely ; let the day bring what it will.

[*They set to work in sullen anger.*

ORME. When grapes were fat and cans were full  
And there was store of wine and wool,  
Even at the board with riches loaded  
The feasting mind a fast foreboded.  
Whatever pleasure man pursues  
In tavern, gaming-hell or stews,  
The law, there's no escaping from it,  
Is first a surfeit then a vomit.  
Oh, 'tis a pleasant thing to range  
The merry chimes of chance and change ;  
One sees how progress is divine  
When they turn wolves who once were swine.  
And yet in loss of flesh I trace  
Sure evidence of growth in grace.  
The butterfly that sips the dew  
Will dine upon the dunghill too ;  
It only needs a little tact,  
The sweet from bitter to extract,  
And like the wind with jolly breath,  
Whistle a jig through the jaws of death

For everything that comes to birth  
 Is matter for the wise man's mirth :  
 Even death, your grinning skulls protest,  
 Is nothing but life's crowning jest.

[*He produces a bottle of wine.*

Come cap of fur and coat of frieze,  
 Lay by your silk apparel,  
 The old year's wine is on the lees,  
 And we must tilt the barrel.

[*Drinks.*

The squirrel's left the beechen mast,  
 The fieldmouse quit the stubble,  
 And like a beggar in the blast  
 Comes winter bent and double.

[*Drinks and hands the flask to BASKERVILLE.*

THE CROWD (*as if shouting a familiar chorus*).

Then buffet him and cuff at him,  
 Admonish him with stones,  
 And make a better man of him  
 By breaking all his bones.

BASK. (*half drunk*).

In hollow lanes I whistle clear  
 As any schoolboy merry.

I pluck the leaf that's thin and sere,  
 I spare the scarlet berry.

CROWD. Then buffet him, etc.

ORME. Art thou the thief of gipsy kind

The year's late buds that pinches  
 And blasts them with a freezing wind  
 Until they die by inches ?

BASK. These little foundlings of the fall  
 On autumn's bounty fathered,

Since death awaits us one and all,

Why should they not be gathered ?

CROWD (*beating him*).

Then buffet him, etc.

ORME. Hunger hath taken my advice

And so forsooth shall avarice.

Now for a penny I would shift that stone

And see what lurks behind it.

BASK.

A parlous thing

Unless the Church were by—soul's jeopardy.

A little Roman devil sits in there

Like toad imprisoned in unquarried stone.

Can'st thou speak Latin ?

A WORKMAN.

Go, friend, fetch a stoup

Of holy water : we will dig him out

And you shall hear him squeak when we baptize  
him.

ORME. Permit a prudent friend to ask

If you have quite forgot the flask :

When holy water can't be had

Strong drink will hearten good and bad.

[*They all drink.*

Wine never harmed the jovial god of thunder,

'Twas intellect that burst his brow asunder.

Would ye be rich as well as wise,

Unlock the hoarded gold that lies

Beneath these stones ; the yellow slave

That Solomon his glory gave,

And even to this age survives

To purchase concubines and wives ?

Why then, with me in chorus sing

Before we touch the accursed thing.

Death rides a pale horse ; he respecteth no bounds ;

And who hath outstripped the speed of his hounds ?  
 The run may be long or the run may be short,  
 But winter or summer there's sure to be sport.  
 For where is the fox that can baffle his skill ?  
 If Death hunt the pack they are sure of a kill.  
 Then wrangle and mangle each dog for a bone,  
 Dropsy, sciatica, gravel and stone :  
 Show your teeth if you will ; snarl, whimper or  
 snap ;

But Death rides away with the brush in his cap.

BASK. I like not this hunting song ; it smells of the  
 grave.

ORME. A little earthy or so ; but what would you ?  
 'Tis buried treasure we seek.

Tush, man, convertible coin,  
 Ingle-nooks and ale-house benches,  
 Merry wives and willing wenches.

Virtue ? Here is the only virtue that endures. The  
 gods use it not, and yet it makes men gods. Man  
 may serve his generation : here is that which  
 serveth each in turn. Heaven's jealousy hid it in  
 the earth : man's avarice dug it up again ; and  
 the devil teaches him how to use it.

A friend to love, a friend to hate,  
 To want and care a foe, sir !  
 It furnished Pharaoh's royal state,  
 And Nabuchodonosor.

*[The workmen with pick and crowbar turn up the skeleton  
 of a child, buried for superstitious reasons under  
 the old bridge.]*

ORME. What ? Not an obol ? Now, by holy Paul  
 These Romans loved a jest.

*[The workmen throw down their tools in anger.]*

1st WORKMAN.                   The devil take thee.  
 2nd WORKMAN. Thou trumpery thing, I'll crush thee  
     like a wasp.  
 1st WORKMAN. He ever laid about him with a whip  
     When most he seemed to jest.  
 3rd WORKMAN.                   When we are pinched  
     With nothing in our bellies but the wind,  
     Is he to have his mock and jibe ? Lay on !  
 ORME. Nay, would you play at touch with me touch  
     yonder !

*[He points to the figure of DENYS looking down on them from the parapet of the bridge, his pale face uncovered now above his leper's dress. Exit ORME.*

VOICES IN THE CROWD. Denys !  
 OTHER VOICES. A leper ! God has punished him !  
 OTHERS. God hath delivered him to our vengeance !  
 DENYS.                           Off,  
     Thou clinging death ! I am Denys l'Auxerrois !  
     *[He flings off his leper's dress.]*

THE CROWD. Kill ! Kill !

*[The crowd swarms up the steps but are checked by the boldness of IMOGEN, PETRONILLA, FRANCES, BLANCHE and others of DENYS' partisans, who press forward from the now considerable crowd.]*

PET. Back, back !  
 OTHERS.                       Close round him !  
 PET.                           Take away their weapons.  
     Or if 'tis killing, not one man alone  
     But make a general slaughter.

*[The hostile crowd hesitates.]*

DENYS. Not yet, not yet : not bludgeoned like a beast  
     And beaten to a pulp this butcher's way

With battered brains ! Who said that death was naught ?

What lying record feigns that through death's bars  
The further glory beckons ? Ye are men  
And therefore ye must die.

THE CROWD.                           Thou shalt die first !

DENYS. As ye are men, oh, be compassionate !

THE CROWD. Ask God for mercy.

DENYS.                                 God ! God's love, God's mercy,  
Who freezes the starved bird and blights the flower,  
And left half finished this unstable world  
That He might rock proud cities, holy temples  
Raised to His name, and crush beneath the stones  
Faces of terror turned to Him for pity ;  
Yea, sacrifice to the most monstrous deep  
His children ! Are ye gods that know not pity,  
Or beasts ? What fiercer madness shakes ye now,  
Tossing your Mænad locks for viperous death ?  
Ye have drunk blood, and your red eyeballs roll  
Through blood-tinged smoke. Would death had  
found us then

'Mid purple plunder of the bronze-leaved vine,  
Or with those ebon juices surfeited  
That steep the soul in sleep ; and we were laid  
Like careless drunkards with our wreaths awry  
Under the sunlit grass.

ONE OF THE CROWD. There's blood upon his face !  
Blood ! Blood !

DENYS. Come with swift strides then. Oh, if I had a  
weapon

I would do this for a sick dog. But now  
I that was sick and mad am sane and sound,  
Troubled no more with dreams of heaven and hell.  
I that cried out for pity and to drink

Death as a loving cup, yea, fall on death  
As from love's arms with sated appetite  
And with the drowsy surfeit sink to sleep,  
Feel all my parts as members uncreate,  
Excelling mortal mettle, and my soul  
A king, that bears on high so proud a crest  
Ye strike at me in vain !

THE CROWD. Strike ! Strike him down !  
Remember Angell's son ! Remember Doris !

[They close upon him and beat him down. As he falls, AUXERRE, the BISHOP and PHILIP with his mounted men-at-arms surge forward, drive back the mob and gather round the body.

SOME OF THE MOB. Oh, horror !

Aux. Get you back, you clumsy fools !  
Look, look, what lubber's work !

[HERMES and ARIANE breathless with haste force their way to the body.

Aux. This is the cruellest work  
Murder ere wrought. If I could purchase back  
His breath with blood of them that butchered him  
I'd slaughter ye like sheep !

AUX. And let it be remembered I who banned him  
Loved him at heart, and hung my soul with black  
In sorrow for his death.

HER. He feared to die,  
But now he's passed beyond the gates of fear.

AUX. O Philip, Philip !

PHIL. Good, my lord, my soul  
That passion dyed so bloody and so dark  
Grows pale at this. In sorrow sheathe your swords ;  
The boon we would have given him is his.

[*He dismounts.*

AUX. Come hither, daughter ; weep upon my breast ;  
Thou must not shed those bitter inward tears  
That bleed the soul to death. And these events  
Let death interpret, speak the epilogue :  
For we that are the actors mar our parts  
And miss the purport.

HER. Thou poor bruised flesh,  
I'll hide thee reverently in hallowed earth.  
Let no man judge him ; they that loved him weep  
And they that hated bury their hate in's grave.

AUX. O Life, he would have spelled some syllable  
Of meaning in thee, but the light failed, the page  
Grew dark.

[*The scene closes.*



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